

COMMENTARY
ON
THE PROPHECY OF
DANIEL

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The book of Daniel is one of the most cited prophetic books of the Old Testament. However, it is also one of the least understood of those works. It is therefore with some degree of trepidation that I offer to Bible students my understanding of this wonderful book.

It is obvious that Daniel's prophecy deals with a large degree of specificity with historical kings and kingdoms, and because many of these kings and kingdoms are so readily identifiable some scholars believe that the book must have been written by someone other than Daniel, and much later. They simply cannot accept it as an inspired foretelling of events.

But Christians do believe that Daniel wrote this book and that its contents were inspired by the omnipotent and omniscient God who created the universe and upholds it by His powerful hand.

My method of interpreting the Bible is simple: context, context, context! And because I believe that this fundamental dogma of hermeneutics helps keep the student close to the truth, whether in a study of prophetic works, such as Daniel or the Apocalypse of John, or in the narratives included in the works we call "the four gospels," I have applied it without hesitation in this present work. Therefore, some who, without considering the context, pluck a verse here or there to support some favorite teaching will find, somewhere, occasion to disagree with some of my conclusions.

Therefore, I urge the student who dares to really study Daniel afresh to consider, carefully and prayerfully, the pages that follow. And may the beneficent God who inspired Daniel to write his book bless the student with all spiritual understanding.

Donald R. Taylor

PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT

Brother Taylor's careful coverage of the biblical text of the book of Daniel, coupled with his knowledge of the history of the area and the time in which Daniel lived, have been combined to create a very helpful commentary on this important book of prophecy.

Admittedly, there are some difficult passages, with various opinions written by various commentators. In light of that, I appreciate brother Taylor's candid closing on the last page: "Is the interpretation which I have given here the correct one? Perhaps not in all respects, but it at least has the merit of remaining within the context."

I am sure that readers will find the book to be very helpful and, based on that confidence, we are happy to make this book available in printed form. God bless you as you study.

Betty (Mrs. J.C.) Choate

March 20, 2017

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A COMMENTARY ON THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL

INTRODUCTION

The prophetic book ascribed to Daniel could not have been written before 539 B.C., since Daniel is mentioned as being present in Babylon when Darius the Mede entered the city. The prophet likely penned his book within a year or two following the capture of the city. This would have provided enough time for him to become appreciated by the new government. We cannot know certainly how long Daniel served in the government of Darius, but the record states that **“Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps”** (Daniel 6:3), which must have required months, if not a year or two. There must have been time enough for jealousies to mature and for Daniel’s commitment to Yahweh to become known to his government colleagues. Because of the intrigues against him, resulting in his ordeal of the den of lions (Daniel 6:16-24), his renown grew nationwide (6:25), and he **“enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian”** (6:28). Darius and Cyrus reigned concurrently, at least for a time, since as a coalition, they had conquered the Babylonian kingdom of Belshazzar. It appears, however, that Cyrus the Persian (Ezra 1:1) was the dominant partner of the coalition, reigning in Susa (Esther 1:1-2) or **“Shushan the palace”** (KJV) while Darius the Mede (Daniel 5:30-31) ruled from the city of Babylon.

A study of Daniel has been compared to a walk through a field, where at first the grass is short and walking is easy, but as one proceeds, the grass grows taller and taller until at the last it is over one’s head. For this reason, episodes recounted in the early chapters of Daniel are well known, but prophecies found in chapters seven through the end of the book are more difficult and less understood.

While partial explanations are given by Daniel for the prophecies recorded in chapters two, four, seven, and eight, those of chapters nine through twelve are much more difficult to understand. Some of the details of these prophecies must remain known only to God.

Daniel's prophecy remains, however, extremely important for Christians. Daniel foretold not only the appearance and death of Messiah (9:25-26), but also the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (2:44). His prophecy concerning the devastation of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman general Titus (9:26-27) was referenced even by Christ (Matthew 24:15-28). It is obvious that a good knowledge of ancient history is required for a proper understanding of the book of Daniel.

THE STORY AND CONTENTS

In the year 605 B.C., the third year of King Jehoiakim (2 Kings 24:1-2; Daniel 1:1-4), eight years before the young priest Ezekiel began the long trek to Babylon, the young boy Daniel, perhaps in his early teens, was carried into exile on the first deportation. Daniel apparently belonged to one of the **"noble"** families of Judah (Daniel 1:3), a youth **"in whom was no defect,"** good looking and intelligent.

It was Nebuchadnezzar's (605-562 B.C.) intention to train such young men to become his personal servants (1:4-5), among those chosen, four young men named **"Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah"** (Daniel 1:6). Nebuchadnezzar ordered that these Hebrew youths be given new names – Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego – Chaldean names which honored the gods of Babylon (1:7). For three years these young men were educated in the **"language and literature of the Chaldeans"** (1:4), and prepared physically for the service of the king. From the beginning, Daniel was the standout (Daniel 1:8-21). The "education" process was supposed to last three years (1:5), at the conclusion of which the four young men **"entered the king's personal service"** (1:19). Daniel's status was raised when, in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (2:1), Daniel revealed to the king both his

forgotten dream and its meaning (Daniel 2:1-45). The king appointed young Daniel to be **“ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon”** (2:48). At Daniel’s request, the king also elevated Daniel’s three friends **“over the administration”** of the province (2:49).

DREAMS AND VISIONS IN DANIEL

Extraordinary dreams or visions related and explained in the book of Daniel are as follows:

- (1) King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great statue (Daniel 2);
- (2) King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great tree (Daniel 4);
- (3) King Belshazzar’s vision at his feast (Daniel 5);
- (4) Daniel’s vision of the four great beasts (Daniel 7);
- (5) Daniel’s vision of the ram and the goat (Daniel 8);
- (6) Daniel’s vision of the seventy weeks (Daniel 9:20-27);
- (7) Daniel’s terrifying vision on the bank of the Tigris River (Daniel 10:1-9);
- (8) Daniel’s vision regarding the archangel Michael who was to fight against “the prince of Persia” and “the prince of Greece” (Daniel 10:10-12:13).

Other well-known episodes affecting Daniel and his friends occur (Daniel 3-4) without any references to dates which might help us determine Daniel’s approximate age, so we can suppose that several years may have passed between some of the events recorded, and these events may not follow chronologically. Speculating that if Daniel was perhaps 15 years old when he was deported, he would have been about 58 years old at the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 562 B.C., and 81 years old at the time of Belshazzar’s banquet in 539 B.C. (Daniel 5:1).

THE RISE AND FALL OF KINGDOMS

Daniel’s prophecies involve the rise of four major kingdoms and several lesser “spin-off” kingdoms of the Greek empire.

- (1) BABYLON (605-539 B.C.), including Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar.

(2) MEDO-PERSIA (539-330 B.C.), including Darius of Media and Cyrus of Persia.

(3) GREECE (330-323 B.C.), with Alexander the Great.

Following the death of Alexander in 323 B.C., the empire was broken into four spin-off Greek kingdoms. These would continue until the ascendancy of Rome in 164 B.C. These four Hellenic kingdoms were initially ruled by Alexander's four generals: (1) Lysimachus received Thrace and Asia Minor; (2) Cassander received Macedon; (3) Seleucus received Syria and Mesopotamia; (4) Ptolemy I received Egypt and North Africa. Of these four "spin-off" kingdoms, only the Seleucid kings of Syria and the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt are important to Daniel's narrative (chapters 8 and 11). The Seleucids are referred to as the kings "of the North," and the Ptolemies are called the kings "of the South."

Antiochus III (the Great), a famous "king of the North" (11:15), controlled Palestine as early as 197 B.C. His more famous son was Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.). In the context of Daniel 11:16, the "Beautiful Land" refers to Palestine, the Jewish homeland, which both the Seleucids and the Ptolemies wished to control. In 164 B.C., Jewish fighters led by Judas Maccabeus, defeated the forces of Antiochus IV and set up an independent state of Judea. The Hasmoneans established what amounted to a theocratic government which lasted as a puppet state of Rome until 37 B.C. when Herod the Great was made king of Judea by Rome.

(4) ROME (27 B.C. - A.D. 476).

Rome was powerful for hundreds of years as a Republic, and as a Republic it conquered the Greek kingdoms by the middle of the second century B.C. Those kingdoms continued on into the first century B.C., but much weakened and under the heavy hand of Rome. Octavian, better known as Augustus, became the first emperor of Rome in 27 B.C.

CHAPTER ONE

YOUNG DANIEL'S FIRST TEST

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 1:1-5

1:1 – In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

2 The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles,

4 youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

5 The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service.

COMMENTARY

Daniel and his three friends were chosen as part of what appears to have been a larger group of candidates as special servants to king Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1:3-4). Only Daniel and his three companions are named. We are not told how old these young men were, but can suppose that they were in their early teens. For the purpose of this study, we will guess that Daniel was about fifteen years old. The preparation period for the youths was set to last for three years, during which they would be instructed in **“the literature and language of the Chaldeans”** (1:5). The term “Chaldeans” refers to a class of wise men who served with “all the magicians and conjurers” (1:20; 2:2) as

advisors to the king of Babylon. Consequently, God would eventually give to the four Hebrew youths **“knowledge and intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom”** (1:17).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 1:6-21

6 Now among them from the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

7 Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

8 But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself.

9 Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials,

10 and the commander of the officials said to Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has appointed your food and your drink, for why should he see your faces looking more haggard than the youths who are your own age? Then you would make me forfeit my head to the king.”

11 But Daniel said to the overseer whom the commander of the officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah,

12 “Please test your servants for ten days and let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink,

13 Then let our appearance be observed in your presence and the appearance of the youths who are eating the king's choice food; and deal with your servants according to what you see.”

14 So he listened to them in this matter and tested them for ten days.

15 At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they were fatter than all the youths who had been eating the king's choice food.

16 So the overseer continued to withhold their choice food and the wine they were to drink, and kept giving them vegetables.

17 As for these four youths, God gave them knowledge and

intelligence in every branch of literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams.

18 Then at the end of the days which the king had specified for presenting them, the commander of the officials presented them before Nebuchadnezzar.

19 The king talked with them, and out of them all not one was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël and Azariah; so they entered the king's personal service.

20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers who were in all his realm.

21 And Daniel continued until the first year of Cyrus the king.

COMMENTARY

First, however, the young men would be prepared physically. This meant that the officials in charge of their education would prescribe for them a special regimen of food and drink. Because this diet would certainly include food which was first offered to idol gods and which would not be prepared in accordance with Jewish law, Daniel and his three friends refused to eat it and thus “defile” themselves (1:8).

When the official in charge objected, Daniel requested permission of the commander of the officials to be tested for ten days, during which they would consume only vegetables and water. The commander allowed this, and at the end of the ten-day period, the young men appeared more robust and healthy than the other youths who had complied with the king's demands (1:15). They then were presented to Nebuchadnezzar and **“entered the king's personal service”** (1:18-19). During their service to the king, as he **“consulted them,”** they were found to be **“ten times better than all the magicians and conjurers”** of the realm (1:20).

Although one might suppose that a longer period of time had passed, Daniel's first great triumph would occur while he was still in the three-year period of training (1:5), during Nebuchadnezzar's second year as king (2:1), and Daniel's second year of training.

CHAPTER TWO

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S "FORGOTTEN" DREAM

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 2:1-11

2:1 Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

2 Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

3 The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

4 Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: "O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

5 The king replied to the Chaldeans, "The command from me is firm; if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubble heap.

6 But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation."

7 They answered a second time and said, "Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation."

8 The king replied, "I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm,

9 that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation."

10 The Chaldeans answered the king and said, "There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch

as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean.

11 Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh."

COMMENTARY

In the second year of his reign (604 B.C.), King Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that both mystified and troubled him greatly (Daniel 2:1). Awakening with a start from his troubled sleep, he immediately called for those whose business it was to interpret such mysteries (2:2). There does not seem to be much difference between sorcerers, magicians, and conjurers, but those called "**Chaldeans**" seem to stand out from the rest and to speak for the group (2:4-5, 10). When the king explained to them that he had had a troublesome dream and that he required them to explain it to him, the Chaldeans confidently took charge and asked the king to tell them his dream. Then they "**will declare the interpretation**" of the dream. But the matter immediately became complicated when Nebuchadnezzar insisted that these men first tell him what the dream was!

Whether the king had forgotten his dream, or only refused to divulge it, is not clear from the text. The KJV reads, "**I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit is troubled to know the dream**" (2:3), but the idea seems to be that the king did not "**understand**" the dream. In fact, it seems clear that the king had great doubts about the ability of the Chaldeans to really interpret such mysteries (2:8-9), and may have been using this as a test of their alleged abilities (2:9). When the Chaldeans argued that no one on earth (2:10) could tell the king what his dream was, the king decreed that all of these men throughout the kingdom be hunted down and killed (2:12-13). Daniel and his friends were on the list of the condemned!

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 2:12-28

12 Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

13 So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.

14 Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon;

15 he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter.

16 So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.

17 Then Daniel went to his house and informed his friends, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah about the matter.

18 so that they might request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that Daniel and his friends would not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

19 Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven;

20 Daniel said, "Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power belong to Him.

21 It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men and knowledge to men of understanding.

22 It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with Him.

23 To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, for You have made known to us the king's matter."

24 Therefore, Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon; he went and spoke to him as follows: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon! Take me into the king's presence, and I will declare the interpretation to the king."

25 Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence

and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!"

26 The king said to Daniel, whose name was Beltshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?"

27 Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians, nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

28 However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed."

COMMENTARY

Learning of the king's decree, Daniel immediately went to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard (2:14), to find out the reason for the decree. Then he went to Nebuchadnezzar and asked that the order be delayed for a short time, assuring him that he would **"declare the interpretation to the king"** (2:16). This required great faith on Daniel's part, since there is no reason to believe that Daniel knew himself to be a "prophet" in any sense. Daniel was yet a "youth." The king's dream occurred during the second year of his reign (2:1), and Daniel was apparently still in the three-year period of re-education (1:5). Daniel had not yet acquired the great standing indicated in 1:20.

The king granted the stay of execution, allowing Daniel and his friends time to **"request compassion from the God of heaven concerning this mystery"** (2:18). God heard their prayers and revealed the dream and its interpretation to Daniel (2:19). Thus armed, Daniel approached the king. He began by assuring him that no man could reveal such mysteries without the help of the God of Israel (2:27), and that the interpretation of the dream would not be from his own human wisdom, but from the **"God of heaven"** (2:28).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 2:29-35

29 As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.

30 But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

31 You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and in appearance was awesome.

32 The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

34 You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.

35 Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

COMMENTARY

Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream a huge statue **"of extraordinary splendor"** (2:31). The head of the statue was of gold, the breast and arms were of silver, the belly and thighs were of bronze, and the legs and feet were of iron and clay (2:32-33). In his dream, the king saw that a stone, cut out **"without hands," "struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay,"** crushing them and causing the entire statue to collapse and, like **"chaff from the summer threshing floors"** to be swept away by the wind, leaving nothing behind (2:34-35). Then the stone that had destroyed the statue **"became a great mountain and filled the whole earth"** (2:35).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 2:36-43

36 "This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king.

37 You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory;

38 and wherever the sons of men dwell, of the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

39 After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

40 Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.

41 In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay.

42 As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle.

43 And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery."

COMMENTARY

Daniel's interpretation follows (2:36-45). Nebuchadnezzar had no doubt been greatly disturbed to see the statue destroyed, fearing perhaps its destruction presaged the destruction of his own kingdom, so he was probably relieved to see himself represented as the **"head of gold,"** the first kingdom (2:36-38). Daniel continued to inform the king that **"after him"** there would be a second kingdom, **"inferior"** to his own, represented by the breast and arms of silver, and a third kingdom represented by the belly and thighs of bronze (2:39).

To Nebuchadnezzar's relief, no time frame was given for these transitions to occur, and no hint was given in this dream of

the identification of these future kingdoms. Following these, there would be a fourth kingdom (2:40-43), represented by the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay. This would be a very **“strong”** kingdom that would **“shatter”** and break **“in pieces”** anything that would oppose it. But it would be somewhat weakened, a fact represented by the mixture of iron and clay (2:42).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 2:44-49

44 “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

45 Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face and did homage to Daniel, and gave orders to present to him an offering and fragrant incense.

47 The king answered Daniel and said, “Surely your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery.”

48 Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

49 And Daniel made request of the king, and he appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon, while Daniel was at the king’s court.

COMMENTARY

Then, there would be a fifth kingdom, one established by the same **“God of heaven”** who revealed the mystery (2:44-45). This kingdom is represented by the **“stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands”** (2:45). This kingdom was destined to

“endure forever,” therefore differing greatly from the kingdoms which preceded it.

Historically, we know that Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylonian kingdom was defeated by the Medo-Persian coalition in 539 B.C. Daniel himself records this in Daniel 5:30-31. The Medo-Persian Empire was itself defeated by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C., initiating Greek dominance throughout the Mediterranean world from Greece to India, which would last until 164 B.C. when Rome became dominant. Although a much changed empire would continue in the east until A.D.1453, with Constantinople as its capital, it is generally recognized that the Roman Empire, with Rome as its capital, ended in A.D. 476, following successive humiliating defeats at the hands of the Visigoths (A.D. 410), the Vandals (A.D. 429), and the Huns (A.D. 451). (Durant, **Caesar and Christ**, P. 670).

Although Daniel could not at that time provide these details to Nebuchadnezzar, he did receive a vision from God during the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar’s grandson (Daniel 8). The divine interpretation of this vision mentions by name the Medo-Persian kingdom (8:20) and that of Greece (8:21).

The fifth kingdom, which would **“endure forever,”** is without doubt the spiritual kingdom which would be built by the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. This is the kingdom of which John the Baptist said, **“The kingdom of heaven is at hand”** (Matthew 3:2). It is the same one spoken of by Christ as He gave to Peter the **“keys of the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 16:19). When Christ was standing before Pilate’s judgment seat, He affirmed not only that He had been **“born”** to be king, but that He was in fact a king, ruling over a **“kingdom”** that was **“not of this world”** (John 18:36-37). The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians that **“He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son”** (Colossians 1:13).

It is obvious to Bible students that Christ is presently reigning over His spiritual kingdom, and that He will continue to **“reign**

until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death" (1 Corinthians 15:25), a reference to the resurrection of all the dead at the end of the world. Following the resurrection, Christ the King will **"hand over the kingdom"** to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).

Following Daniel's interpretation of this vision, Nebuchadnezzar paid **"homage"** to young Daniel (2:46), declaring, **"Surely, your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, since you have been able to reveal this mystery"** (2:47). He then promoted Daniel, making him **"ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect over all the wise men of Babylon"** (2:48). At Daniel's request, the king also **"appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego over the administration of the province of Babylon"** (2:49).

CHAPTER THREE

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S GOLDEN IMAGE

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 3:1-18

3:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, the height of which was sixty cubits and its width six cubits; he set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

2 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent word to assemble the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

3 Then the satraps, the prefects and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates and all the rulers of the provinces were assembled for the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

4 Then the herald loudly proclaimed: "To you the command is given, O peoples, nations and men of every language,

5 that at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king has set up.

6 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire."

7 Therefore at that time, when all the peoples heard the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, bagpipe and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

8 For this reason at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and brought charges against the Jews.

9 They responded and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king: "O king, live forever!

10 You, O king, have made a decree that every man who hears the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery, and bagpipe and all kinds of music, is to fall down and worship the golden image.

11 But whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.

12 There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon, namely Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego. These men, O king, have disregarded you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

13 Then Nebuchadnezzar in rage and anger gave orders to bring Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. Then these men were brought before the king.

14 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?

15 Now if you are ready, at the moment you hear the sound of the horn, flute, lyre, trigon, psaltery and bagpipe and all kinds of music, to fall down and worship the image that I have made, very well. But if you do not worship, you will immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire, and what god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?"

16 Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter.

17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire, and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

18 But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

COMMENTARY

Despots such as Nebuchadnezzar have often engaged in acts of self-glorification. Whether the king on his own devised this stunt

or it was suggested to him by the Chaldeans, Nebuchadnezzar authorized the construction of an **“image of gold,” “sixty cubits”** tall and **“six cubits”** in width (3:1). A **“cubit”** measured eighteen inches, making the statue as tall as a nine-story building! He then ordered that every official of the kingdom should come to the dedication ceremony (3:2). A royal decree would be read requiring that at a given musical signal everyone should **“fall down and worship the golden image”** (3:5). Anyone who refused to worship the image would **“immediately be cast into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire”** (3:6). At the signal, which seems to have been sent out throughout the empire at the same time, **“all the peoples, nations and men of every language fell down and worshiped”** the image (3:7).

At that point, it appears that the Chaldeans were keeping an attentive eye on **“certain Jews”** who, of course, were bound by their conscience not to worship any such image. The political success of Daniel and his friends had caused jealousy on the part of the Chaldeans and the other royal advisors of the realm. Although the text does not say that Daniel’s enemies were instrumental in Nebuchadnezzar’s project to build his huge **“image of gold”** (3:1 ff), they certainly took advantage of it to accuse Daniel’s friends. Since no date is indicated in the text, we cannot know how long Daniel and his friends had worked in Nebuchadnezzar’s service, nor how old they might have been when this test of their faith occurred. It seems likely, however, that they were by this time adults and not teens. Nebuchadnezzar’s thirty-three-year reign would allow time for jealousies and intrigues against the Jews to mature.

The Chaldeans immediately came forward to accuse Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who had refused to obey the king’s command. Apparently, the Chaldeans had not kept an eye on Daniel, since he was not included in their accusation. Nebuchadnezzar, **“in rage and anger,”** ordered that these men whom he had promoted in his government be brought before him. Unless they relented and worshiped his golden image, they would be thrown

into the furnace of fire! In response to the king's threat, the three Jews boldly answered, **"O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up"** (3:16-18).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 3:19-30

19 Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with wrath, and his facial expression was altered toward Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. He answered by giving orders to heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated.

20 He commanded certain valiant warriors who were in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego in order to cast them into the furnace of blazing fire.

21 Then these men were tied up in their trousers, their coats, their caps and their other clothes, and were cast into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire.

22 For this reason, because the king's command was urgent and the furnace had been made extremely hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who carried up Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

23 But these three men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, fell into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire still tied up.

24 Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astounded and stood up in haste; he said to his high officials, "Was it not three men we cast bound into the midst of the fire?" They replied to the king, "Certainly, O king."

25 He said, "Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods!"

26 Then Nebuchadnezzar came near the door of the furnace of blazing fire; he responded and said, "Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, come out, you servants of the Most High God, and

come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego came out of the midst of the fire.

27 The satraps, the prefects, the governors and the king's high officials gathered around and saw in regard to these men that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men nor was the hair of their head singed, nor were their trousers damaged, nor had the smell of fire even come upon them.

28 Nebuchadnezzar responded and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who put their trust in Him, violating the king's command, and yielded up their bodies so as not to serve or worship any god except their own God.

29 Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation or tongue that speaks anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego shall be torn limb from limb and their houses reduced by a rubbish heap, inasmuch as there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way."

30 Then the king caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon.

COMMENTARY

Filled with rage, so that his **"facial expression was altered,"** Nebuchadnezzar ordered that the furnace be heated **"seven times"** more than usual, ignoring the fact that such overheating would be dangerous to his own soldiers (3:19). So it happened that when the soldiers approached to throw the three Jews into the fire, they were themselves killed by the extreme heat (3:32). Suddenly, however, the king was **"astounded"** to see these three men loose from their bonds and walking around unharmed in the flames! And there was a fourth person there with them, who looked **"like a son of the gods"** (3:25)!

Approaching as near to the furnace as he dared, the king called on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego to come out of the furnace. Everyone present was able to see that they were completely

unharméd! Even their clothes were not damaged! The king began to praise the God of the Jews who had **“sent His angel”** to protect them (3:28). He then decreed that any person who dared speak a disparaging word against the God of the Jews would be torn limb from limb and his houses reduced to rubble (3:29).

Nebuchadnezzar then issued this proclamation throughout his realm: **“It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me. How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation.”** (4:1-3).

Nebuchadnezzar then **“caused Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego to prosper in the province of Babylon”** (3:30).

CHAPTER FOUR

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S VISION OF "THE GREAT TREE"

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 4:1-7

4:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king to all the peoples, nations, and men of every language that live in all the earth: "May your peace abound!

2 It has seemed good to me to declare the signs and wonders which the Most High God has done for me.

3 How great are His signs and how mighty are His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and His dominion is from generation to generation."

4 I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at ease in my house and flourishing in my palace.

5 I saw a dream and it made me fearful; and these fantasies as I lay on my bed and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

6 So I gave orders to bring into my presence all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

7 Then the magicians, the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners came in and I related the dream to them, but they could not make its interpretation known to me."

COMMENTARY

Parts of this chapter appear to be narrated by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, who speaks in the first person (4:4-18, 34-37). Whether this narration was first written by Nebuchadnezzar and later included by Daniel in his book, or if it was given directly to Daniel by divine inspiration is not important. Many historical books in the Old Testament mention non-biblical sources, and the prophet Isaiah sometimes quotes word for word from 2 Kings (Cf. Isaiah 36-39).

It is not clear when Nebuchadnezzar's dream occurred, except that it certainly came much later than the events of chapters 2-3. In the first place, the prophet Daniel appears to be much older than in chapters 2-3, and was already well recognized as one **"in whom is a spirit of the holy gods"** (4:8). Furthermore, the mention of Nebuchadnezzar's magnificent palace, which he himself had **"built as a royal residence"** (4:29-30), indicates a date deep into his 43-year reign. The fact that the story of Belshazzar's feast, marking the end of the dynasty, follows immediately, argues for this conclusion. That Nebuchadnezzar did not call Daniel first may be because protocol had not changed. Before Daniel could be summoned, the long established, politically powerful clans of magicians, conjurers, diviners, and **"Chaldeans"** first had to be called before the king (4:7).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 4:8-9

8 But finally Daniel came in before me, whose name is Belteshazzar according to the name of my god, and in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and I related the dream to him, saying,

9 "O Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen, along with its interpretation."

COMMENTARY

Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the **"great tree"** was as alarming to him as was his dream of the great statue (Daniel 2), so he immediately set about to discover what it might mean. When his Chaldeans and diviners could not satisfy him, he turned to Daniel, saying, **"Since I know that a spirit of the holy gods is in you and no mystery baffles you, tell me the visions of my dream which I have seen along with its interpretation"** (4:9).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 4:10-18

10 "Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed. I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great.

11 The tree grew large and became strong and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth.

12 Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it.

13 I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.

14 He shouted out and spoke as follows: 'Chop down the tree and cut off its branches. Strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts flee from under it and the birds from its branches.

15 Yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field. And let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth.

16 Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let a beast's mind be given to him, and let seven periods of time pass over him.

17 This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers and the decision is a command of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and set over it the lowliest of men.'

18 This is the dream which I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, tell me its interpretation, inasmuch as none of the wise men of my kingdom is able to make known to me the interpretation; but you are able, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you."

COMMENTARY

The dream was of a very large and tall tree whose branches **"reached to the sky"** (4:11). Its **"foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant"** (4:11). The animals of the forest benefited from the food from the tree and found **"shade"** beneath it. Suddenly, a **"holy one,"** a **"watcher,"** descended from the sky ("heaven") with a loud cry, **"Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit."** But the heavenly **"watcher"** instructed that a **"stump"** be preserved with **"its roots in the ground,"** and that a **"band of iron and**

bronze” be placed around the stump (4:13-15). Then the language of the account changes somewhat and the **“tree”** or **“stump”** is suddenly referred to as **“him”** (4:15-16), so that we may understand that the subject of the dream is a man. **“Let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts in the grass of the earth. Let his mind be changed from that of a man and let a beast’s mind be given to him.”** This condition would last for **“seven periods”** (4:16), which is generally interpreted to be seven years.

The point of this dream was that Nebuchadnezzar might be led to understand that **“the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes and sets over it the lowliest of men”** (4:17).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 4:19-27

19 Then Daniel, whose name is Belteshazzar, was appalled for a while as his thoughts alarmed him. The king responded and said, “Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation alarm you.” Belteshazzar replied. “My lord, if only the dream applied to those who hate you and its interpretation to your adversaries!

20 The tree that you saw, which became large and grew strong, whose height reached to the sky and was visible to all the earth

21 and whose foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in which was food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt and in whose branches the birds of the sky lodged,

22 it is you, O king; for you have become great and grown strong, and your majesty has become great and reached to the sky and your dominion to the end of the earth.

23 In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying, ‘Chop down the tree and destroy it; yet leave the stump with its roots in the ground, but with a band of iron and bronze around it in the new grass of the field, and let him be drenched with the dew of heaven, and let him share with the beasts of the field until seven periods of time pass over him,

24 this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king;

25 that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes.

26 And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules.

27 Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor, in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.”

COMMENTARY

Daniel was **“appalled”** as he listened to the King’s narrative, and **“alarmed”** at the thought of having to reveal to the king the terrible event that would befall him (4:19). Indeed, Daniel would be risking his life to tell such a potentate as Nebuchadnezzar that the tree represented him and that he was going to be **“chopped down”** and **“destroyed”**! Bearers of bad news were often put to death in those days! However, Daniel faithfully told the meaning as God revealed it to him. Nebuchadnezzar would be **“driven away from mankind”** and his **“dwelling place”** would be with the **“beasts of the field”** for seven years. He would **“be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven”** (4:25). In short, Nebuchadnezzar would be insane or mad for seven years and someone else would replace him as ruler of Babylon during that time. However, as the **“stump”** was preserved, Nebuchadnezzar would be restored to the throne at the end of that period (4:26).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 4:28-37

28 All this happened to Nebuchadnezzar the king.

29 Twelve months later he was walking on the roof of the royal palace of Babylon.

30 The king reflected and said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?"

31 While the word was in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, saying, "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: sovereignty has been removed from you,

32 and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes."

33 Immediately the word concerning Nebuchadnezzar was fulfilled; and he was driven away from mankind and began eating grass like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

34 But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation.

35 All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

36 At that time my reason returned to me. And my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom, and my counselors and my nobles began seeking me out; so I was reestablished in my sovereignty, and surpassing greatness was added to me.

37 Now, I Nebuchadnezzar, praise, exalt and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are true and His ways just, and He is able to humble those who walk in pride.

COMMENTARY

Twelve months later (4:28-29), as the king was walking on the roof of his royal palace, remembering the dream's interpretation,

but boasting that it was he who had built the palace for his own glory (4:30), a voice from heaven interrupted his boasting, and the prophecy was fulfilled in an instant. The heavenly voice said, **“King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared; sovereignty has been removed from you, and you will be driven away from mankind, and your dwelling place will be with the beasts of the field. You will be given grass to eat like cattle, and seven periods of time will pass over you until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whoever He wishes”** (4:31-32). Immediately, his **“reason”** left him. At the end of that period of madness, Nebuchadnezzar’s **“reason returned”** to him and he **“blessed the Most High”** (4:34). Along with his restored **“reason,”** his **“majesty and splendor”** were also restored (4:36). The **“king of kings,”** as Daniel had previously styled Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:37), had learned that there was a Divine Person much greater than he. This Divine Person is **“the King of heaven,”** whose **“works are true and His ways just,”** and who **“is able to humble those who walk in pride”** (Daniel 4:37).

Those who reject the Bible as the word of God, or who reject the book of Daniel as not historically true, deny that such a period of madness ever occurred. They recognize that Nebuchadnezzar did indeed defeat the Jews, destroy the Jewish temple, and utterly lay waste the city of Jerusalem, but they contend that the **“madness”** story is not true, since history, they say, does not confirm it. Yet the Greek historian Herodotus (440 B.C.), who wrote **“lengthy descriptions”** (Shea, 143) of the fall of Babylon, recorded that such did indeed happen. We know that at some point after 530 B.C. the prophet Daniel was included by Darius the Mede as one of three commissioners in charge of his satraps (Daniel 6:1-4). Admitting that the historian Herodotus must have been a person of ripe age when he wrote his histories, there would have been only a couple of generations between Daniel’s death and Herodotus’ writing, not enough time for events such as transpired during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign and recorded in Daniel to be forgotten.

While no reference is made to Nebuchadnezzar's **"madness"** in the official royal records, it cannot be conclusively ruled out just because only the Bible references it. It is a fact that royal chroniclers customarily recorded nothing that would bring reproach on their king, and that they expunged unfavorable references in order to preserve the king's legacy. Consequently, defeats were rarely recorded, only victories. And it is also a fact that many events recorded in the Bible, once rejected by nonbelievers, are now recognized as authentic because of newly discovered evidence.

Those of us who accept that Daniel was inspired by God to write his prophecy certainly rejoice when archeological discoveries verify biblical history, but our faith does not depend upon such discoveries.

“MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN”

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 5:1-4

5:1 Belshazzar the king held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in the presence of the thousand.

2 When Belshazzar tasted the wine, he gave orders to bring the gold and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them.

3 Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God which was in Jerusalem; and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them.

4 They drank the wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.

COMMENTARY

The great city Babylon was tightly shut up. Within three concentric walls which were reputed to be unassailable, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson Belshazzar, the ruler of Babylon, was hosting a great feast for **“a thousand of his nobles”** (Daniel 5:1). This was no ordinary feast as might be held during times of peace, because the city had been under siege for some time by the armies of Cyrus the Persian, and the city gates were tightly shut. It is likely that Belshazzar was well aware that the end was near for him and his city, and was attempting to drown his anxiety with wine.

With his wives and concubines gathered with him, Belshazzar suddenly remembered that his illustrious forefather, Nebuchadnezzar, had brought from Jerusalem a huge treasure of gold and silver vessels. These valuable cups or bowls had been taken from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, but were now stored in the Babylonian treasury. Belshazzar, very likely already affected by the wine, decided on an impulse to have those vessels brought to him. He and his company would drink wine

from them in honor of their Babylonian **“gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone”** (Daniel 5:4)! Perhaps Belshazzar thought there would be some irony in this profanation of vessels which had come from the temple of the God of the Hebrews!

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 5:5-12

5 Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing.

6 Then the king's face grew pale and his thoughts alarmed him, and his hip joints went slack and his knees began knocking together.

7 The king called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king spoke and said to the wise men of Babylon, “Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me shall be clothed with purple and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as third ruler in the kingdom.”

8 Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the inscription or make known its interpretation to the king.

9 Then King Belshazzar was greatly alarmed, his face grew even paler, and his nobles were perplexed.

10 The queen entered the banquet hall because of the words of the king and his nobles; the queen spoke and said, “O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face be pale.

11 There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners.

12 This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation.”

COMMENTARY

As this august company drank, the **“fingers of a man’s hand”** suddenly appeared on the plaster of the wall facing the king (Daniel 5:5). As the fingers continued to write on the wall, the **“king’s face grew pale,”** his **“hip joints went slack,”** and his **“knees began knocking together”** (5:6)! He immediately called for the **“conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners,”** hoping to get an explanation of the words he saw written on the wall. When these learned men could not **“read the inscription”** or **“make known its interpretation”** (5:8), his queen reassured him, reminding him of Daniel who many years earlier had interpreted dreams and visions for Nebuchadnezzar (5:10-12). If we guess that Daniel had been about fifteen years old when he first arrived in Babylon as a captive, he would be about eighty-one years old at this time. Belshazzar called for Daniel and promised, among other things, to make him the **“third ruler”** of the kingdom if he could reveal the meaning of the handwriting on the wall (5:16). Daniel immediately refused the terms, but agreed to reveal the meaning of the words.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 5:13-31

13 Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel who is one of the exiles from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?”

14 Now I have heard about you that a spirit of the gods is in you, and that illumination, insight and extraordinary wisdom have been found in you.

15 Just now the wise men and the conjurers were brought in before me that they might read this inscription and make its interpretation known to me, but they could not declare the interpretation of the message.

16 But I personally have heard about you, that you are able to give interpretations and solve difficult problems. Now if you are able to read the inscription and make its interpretation known to me, you will be clothed with purple and wear a necklace of gold

around your neck, and you will have authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.”

17 Then Daniel answered and said before the king, “Keep your gifts for yourself or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him.

18 O king, the Most High God granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father.

19 Because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated and whomever he wished he humbled.

20 But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne and his glory was taken away from him.

21 He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dews of heaven until he recognized that the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and that He sets over it whomever He wishes.

22 Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this.

23 But you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the God in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.

24 Then the hand was sent from Him and this inscription was written out.

25 Now this is the inscription that was written out: ‘MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN, PERES’

26 This is the interpretation of the message: ‘MENE’ – God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it.

27 ‘TEKEL’—you have been weighed on the scales and found deficient.

28 ‘PERES’ – your kingdom has been divided and given over to the Medes and Persians.”

29 Then Belshazzar gave orders, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a necklace of gold around his neck, and issued a proclamation concerning him that he now had authority as the third ruler in the kingdom.

30 That same night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain.

31 So Darius the Mede received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two.

COMMENTARY

The words “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin” were not strange words for Belshazzar. They were ordinary words that anyone would have recognized. But what they meant in this context was a mystery. Before interpreting the words, Daniel reminded Belshazzar that the **“Most High God,”** Yahweh, had granted glory and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar (5:18), but that when Nebuchadnezzar’s **“heart was lifted up”** to the point that **“he behaved arrogantly,”** Yahweh **“deposed”** him from his royal throne and took away his power. After reminding Belshazzar of Nebuchadnezzar’s period of madness, saying that this was God’s doing (5:21), Daniel sternly chastised Belshazzar for arrogantly praising his man-made gods while drinking from the sacred vessels taken from Yahweh’s **“house”** (5:23).

The Aramaic words mene, tekel, and upharsin all indicated **“measures of weights”** (Baldwin, 124). Mene is a reference to the well-known mina (1 Kings 10:17; Nehemiah 7:71-72), valued at fifty shekels (NASB NOTES). Tekel is an alternate spelling of shekel, and upharsin (“u” plus “pharsin” or “peres”) from a verb form, refers to a “part” or “half” of a mina. The “u” at the beginning of upharsin means “and.” (Baldwin, 125). The point is that everyone

present at Belshazzar's feast knew the words which were written on the wall, but they had no notion of what these words might signify.

Daniel explained that the three words indicated that **"God has numbered [mene] your kingdom and put an end to it."** **"You have been weighed [tekell] on the scales and found deficient."** **"Your kingdom has been divided [peres] and given over to the Medes and Persians"** (5:25-28). Following Daniel's explanation of this mystery, Belshazzar ordered that Daniel be rewarded as he had promised, but **"that same night Belshazzar, the Chaldean king, was slain"** (5:30). During that very night, the army of Cyrus of Persia, led by Darius the Mede, entered the city of Babylon!

How was this accomplished? Great Babylon appeared to be an impregnable fortress city, surrounded by impenetrable walls guarded by heavily armed soldiers. There was no doubt sufficient food stored up for a lengthy siege. The city sat astride the Euphrates River and thus there was water for the inhabitants. Although Daniel does not record how the capture of Babylon in 539 B.C. was accomplished, the city's fall is described by Herodotus, the fifth century B C Greek historian, as follows: "[Cyrus] placed a portion of his army at the point where the river enters the city, and another body at the back of the place where it issues forth, with orders to march into the town by the bed of the stream, as soon as the water became shallow enough: he then himself drew off with the unwarlike portion of his host, and made for the place where [he dug the basin for the river and] turned the Euphrates by a canal into the basin, which was then a marsh, on which the river sank to such an extent that the natural bed of the stream became fordable."

Cyrus's army then marched under the walls on the river bed, taking Babylon by surprise without a battle. (Herodotus, **Histories** 1.191). This is corroborated by the Cyrus Cylinder which can be seen in the British Museum.

CHAPTER SIX

DANIEL IN THE DEN OF LIONS

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 6:1-5

6:1 It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they would be in charge of the whole kingdom,

2 and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one). That these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss.

3 Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

4 Then the commissioners and satraps began trying to find a ground of accusation against Daniel in regard to government affairs; but they could find no ground of accusation or evidence of corruption, inasmuch as he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him.

5 Then these men said, "We will not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God."

COMMENTARY

Darius the Mede **"received the kingdom at about the age of sixty-two"** (Daniel 5:31), in 539 B.C. Daniel would have been about eighty years of age at that point. While there is confusion among some scholars as to the identity of **"Darius the Mede,"** the text of Daniel is clear that there were two rulers of the kingdom we refer to as the **"Medo-Persian"** empire. In his vision of the **"Ram and Goat,"** Daniel plainly states that **"the ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia"** (8:20). Cyrus the Persian, the more powerful of the two kings, ruled from Susa, and Darius the Mede ruled over Babylon. Sometimes the distinctions between the two may not be clear, but this poses no problem for the student of the Bible.

Chapter six begins with the statement that Darius placed three commissioners over the kingdom, of **“whom Daniel was one”** (6:3). The 120 **“satraps”** who performed local duties throughout the kingdom were accountable to these three commissioners. It was noted that since Daniel was widely respected as being honest and faithful in the fulfilment of his state duties and that **“no negligence or corruption was to be found in him,”** he **“began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps.”** This caused jealousies to arise among his governmental colleagues. It also seems clear that these jealousies were in large part because Daniel was **“one of the exiles from Judah”** (6:13). Daniel’s political enemies quickly realized that the only way they would be able to discredit him in the eyes of the king would be through his religion (6:4).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 6:6-9

6 Then these commissioners and satraps came by agreement to the king and spoke to him as follows: “King Darius, live forever!

7 All the commissioners of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the high officials and the governors have consulted together that the king should establish a statute and enforce an injunction that anyone who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, shall be cast into the lions’ den.

8 Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document so that it may not be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked.”

9 Therefore King Darius signed the document, that is, the injunction.

COMMENTARY

So a delegation from among Daniel’s enemies approached Darius with a devious plan, certain to be received by him. They proposed to Darius that he issue a decree that during a period of thirty days no one could make a **“petition to any god or man besides”** Darius himself, and that anyone who did would be cast into a den of

lions (6:6-7). This appealed to Darius's ego, and he readily agreed to do as they proposed, believing that they truly wanted to honor him, not suspecting their true motives. The decree was soon prepared, signed by the king, and published throughout the land. The order was clear and the consequences in the case of disobedience were well understood. Such royal decrees, **"according to the law of the Medes and Persians,"** could not be revoked, even by the king himself (6:8).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 6:10-13

10 Now when Daniel knew that the document was signed, he entered his house (now in his roof chamber he had windows open toward Jerusalem); and he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously.

11 Then these men came by agreement and found Daniel making petition and supplication before his God.

12 Then they approached and spoke before the king about the king's injunction, "Did you not sign an injunction that any man who makes a petition to any god or man besides you, O king, for thirty days, is to be cast into the lions' den?" The king replied, "The statement is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which may not be revoked."

13 Then they answered and spoke before the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the injunction which you signed, but keeps making his petition three times a day."

COMMENTARY

Daniel's religious beliefs and devotion were well known by his enemies. Whether or not Daniel suspected that this was a trap, he may well have remembered what had happened long before to his old friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Daniel 3). But Daniel was fearless and as soon as he learned **"that the document was signed"** he went up to his bedroom on the roof, and completely

visible before his open window, he **“continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously”** (6:10). The men who had set the trap were watching from below (6:11)! They immediately accused Daniel before the king (6:12-13). Darius, who greatly respected and admired Daniel, was **“deeply distressed”** and tried **“even until sunset”** to deliver Daniel, but the law of the Medes and Persians was clear; even the king himself could not annul such a decree (6:15).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 6:14-28

14 Then, as soon as the king heard this statement, he was deeply distressed and set his mind on delivering Daniel; and even until sunset he kept exerting himself to rescue him.

15 Then these men came by agreement to the king and said to the king, “Recognize, O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no injunction or statute which the king establishes may be changed.”

16 Then the king gave orders, and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions’ den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you.”

17 A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing would be changed in regard to Daniel.

18 Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting, and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him.

19 Then the king arose at dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions’ den.

20 When he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?”

21 Then Daniel spoke to the king, “O king, live forever!

22 My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime.

23 Then the king was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den and no injury whatever was found on him, because he has trusted in his God.

24 The king then gave orders, and they brought those men who had maliciously accused Daniel and they cast them, their children and their wives into the lions' den; and they had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

25 Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound!

26 I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, and his dominion will be forever.

27 He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

28 So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

COMMENTARY

So the king issued the order to arrest Daniel and to put him into the lions' den. Darius expressed to Daniel his certainty that **"Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you"** (6:16). A stone was laid over the entrance to the den and sealed by the king with his own signet ring, so that no one could enter and save Daniel. Darius then spent a sleepless night, with no food or entertainment (6:18). Early the next morning Darius went to the lion's den and cried with a **"troubled"** voice, **"Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God whom you constantly serve, been**

able to deliver you from the lions?” Pleased and greatly relieved to see Daniel alive and well after a night with hungry lions, Darius commanded that his accusers themselves, with their wives and children be cast alive into the lions’ den. This was immediately done, and before they **“reached the bottom of the den”** the lions had **“crushed all their bones”** (6:24).

Darius then issued a decree that everyone in the kingdom was to **“fear and tremble before the God of Daniel”** (6:26). And **“Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian”** (6:28).

CHAPTER SEVEN

DANIEL'S VISION OF FOUR BEASTS

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 7:1-3

7:1 In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it.

2 Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

3 And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another."

COMMENTARY

It was in 553 B.C., the first year of the reign of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson. As Daniel lay sleeping on his bed, he beheld the **"dream and visions"** of **"the four great beasts"** (Daniel 7:1). He immediately arose and wrote it down, including it many years later in his book.

In his visions, Daniel saw the **"four winds of heaven"** stirring up the waters of the great sea. Out of the agitated sea there arose **"four great beasts . . . different from one another"** (7:3). These **"beasts"** represented kingdoms which were to arise in the future. The **"sea"** is a figure for the great multitudes of peoples on earth, and the stormy waters indicate, perhaps, the violent nature of the kingdoms indicated in the vision. This vision is similar to Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the great statue (Daniel 2), in that the same kingdoms are predicted in both.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 7:4-7

4 The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.

5 And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear.

And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, "Arise, devour much meat!

6 After this I kept looking and behold, another beast, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

7 After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

THE FIRST BEAST: The first beast was **"like a lion and had the wings of an eagle"** (7:4). As Daniel watched, the wings were plucked off and the **"lion"** stood up on two feet and received the mind of a man. It is clear and accepted by all scholars that this beast represented the Babylonian kingdom. Visitors to the Pergamum Museum, in Berlin, can view up close portions of the ancient wall of Babylon, including the famous Ishtar Gate, where the winged lions are clearly visible. This beast corresponds to the head of gold of the statue in Daniel 2.

THE SECOND BEAST: The second beast was **"like a bear,"** but **"raised up on one side,"** and it was told, **"Arise, devour much meat!"** (7:5). The bear-like beast represents the Medo-Persian kingdom and corresponds to the **"breast and arms of silver"** of Nebuchadnezzar's statue dream in Daniel 2:32-39, and to the vision of the two-horned ram of Daniel 8 where it is explicitly stated that the **"ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia"** (Daniel 8:20). The bear is **"raised up on one side,"** meaning that one of the kings, Cyrus of Persia, had more authority than Darius the Mede. The ram of chapter eight has two horns, one **"longer than the other,"** with the same meaning as the **"raised up"** side of the bear.

THE THIRD BEAST: The third beast was “**like a leopard,**” but with “**four wings**” on its back, and “**four heads.**” “**Dominion**” was given to this beast (7:6). This beast represented the Greek kingdom as did also the male “**shaggy goat**” of Daniel 8:5, 21, and corresponds with the “**belly and thighs of bronze**” of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue (Daniel 2:32,39). The beast of chapter seven has four wings and four heads, referring to the fact that when Alexander the Great died, the kingdom would be broken up and divided among four of his generals, as we will discuss more fully in later chapters.

THE FOURTH BEAST: The fourth beast is not represented as a particular animal, as the previous three were, but is described as being “**dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong.**” The distinguishing features of this beast are its “**large iron teeth**” and “**ten horns**” (7:7). This beast obviously refers to the Roman kingdom and corresponds to the “**legs of iron**” with “**feet partly of iron and partly of clay**” of Nebuchadnezzar’s statue (Daniel 2:33, 40-43). It would be during this Roman period that God would set up a kingdom which would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44-45). So also, during the time of the fourth beast, “**One like a Son of Man**” would receive “**dominion**” from the Ancient of Days (7:13-14), a reference to the Messianic kingdom established by Jesus Christ.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 7:8

8 While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

COMMENTARY

THE LITTLE HORN: A further complication is that, suddenly, from among the horns of the fourth beast, there arose “**another horn, a little one,**” which “**pulled out by the roots**” three of the ten horns. This “**little horn**” had “**eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts**” (7:8). Historically, following the

suicide of Nero in A.D. 68, there was a fierce civil war pitting three powerful Romans, Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, against each other in a struggle to take the throne. General Vespasian, then with his army in Judea, entered the fray, defeating the three other contestants and becoming the sixth emperor of Rome in A.D. 69. This, in my opinion, was the fulfilment of the prophecy of the “**little horn**” of Daniel 7:8.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 7:9-14

9 “I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire.

10 A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him, and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened.

11 Then I kept looking because of the sound of the boastful words which the horn was speaking; I kept looking until the beast was slain, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning fire.

12 As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but an extension of life was granted to them for an appointed period of time.

13 I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.

14 And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

COMMENTARY

As Daniel continued looking and meditating about the meaning of these visions, the “**Ancient of Days took His seat**” on His throne (7:9).

**“His vesture was like white snow,
And the hair of His head like pure wool.
His throne was ablaze with flames,
Its wheels were a burning fire.
A river of fire was flowing
And coming out from before Him;
Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;
The court sat,
And the books were opened.” (7:9-10)**

Daniel continued to watch the vision, listening to the **“boastful words”** of the arrogant **“little horn”** until the **“fourth”** beast was slain and its body burned with fire. The **“dominion”** of the previous three beasts was also taken away, but their **“life”** was extended for a time (7:12), perhaps meaning that the life of each beast was absorbed into that of the one succeeding it.

AN EVERLASTING DOMINION: As he watched **“in the night visions,”** Daniel saw **“One like a Son of Man”** coming **“with the clouds of heaven.”** This celestial being approached the **“Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.”**

**“And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language
Might serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.” (7:14).**

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 7:15-28

15 “As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed within me, and the visions in my mind kept alarming me.

16 I approached one of those who were standing by and began asking him the exact meaning of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things:

17 'These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth.

18 But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come.'

19 Then I desired to know the exact meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its claws of bronze, and which devoured, crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet,

20 and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates.

21 I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them

22 until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.

23 Thus he said: 'The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.

24 As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

25 He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

26 But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

27 Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

28 At this point the revelation ended. As for me, Daniel, my

thoughts were greatly alarming me and my face grew pale, but I kept the matter to myself.”

COMMENTARY

INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION: This strange and violent vision **“distressed”** Daniel and bothered him greatly, so he approached **“one of those who were standing by,”** no doubt an angel, as in Daniel 8:15-17, and asked him **“the exact meaning”** of the visions (7:15-16). The angel then told Daniel the interpretation, **“These great beasts, which are four in number, are four kings who will arise from the earth. But the saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, for all ages to come”** (7:17-18). It is likely that by then Daniel had made the connection between this vision and the one given to Nebuchadnezzar. He would have understood that he was living during the period of the **“head of gold”** (2:36-38). He could not have known, however, what the second and third kingdoms would be, but the fourth beast with its **“horns”** and the **“little horn”** intrigued him greatly. Daniel inquired only about this beast (7:19), perhaps because of its excessive ferocity.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE RAM AND THE GOAT

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 8:1-2

8:1 "In the third year of the reign of Belshazzar the king a vision appeared to me, Daniel, subsequent to the one which appeared to me previously.

2 I looked in the vision and while I was looking I was in the citadel of Susa, which is in the province of Elam; and I looked in the vision and I myself was beside the Ulai Canal."

COMMENTARY

It was during the third year of Belshazzar's reign (551 B.C.) that Daniel saw the vision of the Ram and the Goat (Daniel 8:1). Chronologically, this vision is located out of place in the book. Belshazzar's overthrow in 539 B.C. is related in Daniel 5:30-31. Daniel may have placed the vision here because he was about to begin his prophecies relating to the Greek era, and the **"Goat"** represents the future Greek kingdom of Alexander the Great.

The prophet happened to be at that time in **"the citadel of Susa,"** in the **"province of Elam,"** about 200 miles east of the city of Babylon. Susa would later become the seat of government of the Persian kings (Esther 1:1-2), but was at this time subject to the kings of Babylon, and would continue so for another decade. We cannot know where in the city Daniel might have been located physically, but in the vision he saw himself **"beside the Ulai Canal"** (8:2).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 8:3-4

3 "Then I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a ram which had two horns was standing in front of the canal. Now the two horns were long, but one was longer than the other, with the longer one coming up last.

4 I saw the ram butting westward, northward, and southward, and

no other beasts could stand before him nor was there anyone to rescue from his power, but he did as he pleased and magnified himself.

COMMENTARY

THE RAM: As he stood beside the canal, Daniel saw a **“ram”** which had two long **“horns,”** one of which was longer than the other (8:3). **“Horns”** are symbols of kings or kingdoms (cf. Daniel 7:7; Revelation 17:12). This **“ram”** was particularly aggressive, **“butting westward, northward, and southward,”** dominating all the other animals that it came against. **“He did as he pleased and magnified himself”** (8:4).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 8:5-8

5 “While I was observing, behold, a male goat was coming from the west over the surface of the whole earth without touching the ground, and the goat had a conspicuous horn between his eyes.

6 He came up to the ram that had the two horns, which I had seen standing in front of the canal, and rushed at him in his mighty wrath.

7 I saw him come beside the ram, and he was enraged at him; and he struck the ram and shattered his two horns, and the ram had no strength to withstand him. So he hurled him to the ground and trampled on him, and there was none to rescue the ram from his power.

8 Then the male goat magnified himself exceedingly. But as soon as he was mighty, the large horn was broken; and in its place there came up four conspicuous horns toward the four winds of heaven.”

COMMENTARY

THE GOAT: Daniel then saw a **“male goat”** which was rapidly approaching from the west, running so fast that its feet seemed never to touch the ground! (8:5). The goat had one **“conspicuous horn”** between his eyes. Enraged, he attacked the ram (8:6), striking

and shattering both its horns, hurling him to the ground and trampling him (8:6-7). Then, the goat **“magnified himself exceedingly.”** But in short order his **“large horn”** was broken, being replaced by four other **“conspicuous”** horns which were dispersed toward **“the four winds of heaven”** (8:8).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 8:9-14

9 “Out of one of them came forth a rather small horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Beautiful Land.

10 It grew up to the host of heaven and caused some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth, and it trampled them down.

11 It even magnified itself to be equal with the Commander of the host; and it removed the regular sacrifice from Him, and the place of His sanctuary was thrown down.

12 And on account of transgression the host will be given over to the horn along with the regular sacrifice; and it will fling truth to the ground and perform its will and prosper.

13 Then I heard a holy one speaking, and another holy one said to that particular one who was speaking, ‘How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?’

14 He said to me, ‘For 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the holy place will be properly restored.’”

COMMENTARY

A SMALL HORN: Out of one of these four new **“horns”** there arose a **“rather small horn”** which became **“exceedingly great”** toward the south, the east, and **“toward the Beautiful Land”** (8:9). This **“small horn”** grew up to the **“host of heaven”** and caused some of the **“stars”** to fall to the earth, where it proceeded to trample upon them (8:10). It even attempted to be the equal of the **“Commander of the host,”** removing from Him the **“regular sacrifice”** and tearing down His temple (8:11). It is obvious

from this that **“stars”** represent powerful men. In his arrogance, the **“small horn”** elevated himself, attacking powerful human forces and defeating some of them. Similar symbolism is found in Revelation 8:10-12 where the sun, the moon, and stars represent powerful human forces, one of which fell **“to the earth”** (Revelation 9:1). Likewise, the great tree of Daniel 4, representing king Nebuchadnezzar, grew up to the sky (**“heaven”** KJV), but was chopped down.

Daniel then heard the voice of a **“holy one,”** apparently addressing this situation. Another **“holy one”** then asked the first, **“How long will the vision about the regular sacrifice apply, while the transgression causes horror, so as to allow both the holy place and the host to be trampled?”** (8:13). The response to the question, then relayed to Daniel, was as follows: **“For 2,300 evenings and mornings, then the holy place will be properly restored”** (8:14). The expression **“evenings and mornings”** refers to the daily sacrifices which were done twice a day at the temple. When the temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. these sacrifices stopped. Cyrus, in 538 B.C., authorized Ezra to rebuild the temple of Yahweh (Ezra 1:1-4). Ezra and the large group of exiles with him arrived in Jerusalem in 537 B.C., and in three months **“set up the altar on its foundations”** (Ezra 3:3), recommencing the daily offerings. He was greatly hindered in his work of rebuilding the temple itself, and it would not be completed until 516 B.C., during the sixth year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia (Ezra 5:14-15). Daniel saw the vision of chapter 8 in 551 B.C., some 14 years before Ezra rebuilt the altar, so the **“evening and morning”** sacrifices were not being offered. But Daniel still pictured them in his mind as being offered. The mention of **“2,300 evenings and mornings”** would be 1,150 days of offerings, a little short of three and a half years, meaning that the horrors described in that vision (8:10-14) would last that long.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 8:15-27

15 “When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was the one who looked like a man.

16 And I heard the voice of a man between the banks of Ulai, and he called out and said, 'Gabriel, give this man an understanding of the vision.'

17 So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face, but he said to me, 'Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.'

18 Now while he was talking with me, I sank into a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me and made me stand upright.

19 And he said, 'Behold, I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end.

20 The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia.

21 The shaggy goat represents the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

22 The broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power.

23 In the latter period of their rule, when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue.

24 His power will be mighty, but not by his own power. And he will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will. He will destroy mighty men and the holy people.

25 And through his shrewdness he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; and he will magnify himself by his influence; and he will cause deceit to succeed by his influence; and he will magnify himself in his heart, and he will destroy many while they are at ease. He will be broken without human agency.

26 The vision of the evenings and mornings which has been told is true; but keep the vision secret, for it pertains to many days in the future.'

27 Then I, Daniel, was exhausted and sick for days. Then I got up again and carried on the king's business; but I was astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it."

COMMENTARY

EXPLANATION OF THE VISION: Daniel was attempting to figure out the meaning of the vision when he noticed someone **“who looked like a man,”** but who was obviously a **“holy one,”** apparently **“Gabriel”** (8:16). Another **“man,”** who was **“between the banks of Ulai,”** called out to Gabriel, telling him to explain to Daniel the vision which he had seen. As Gabriel approached him, Daniel was frightened and fell on his face, unconscious (8:17-18). Gabriel woke him with a touch, saying **“I am going to let you know what will occur at the final period of the indignation, for it pertains to the appointed time of the end”** (8:18-19). The **“end”** as used here refers to the end of the Jewish social order of that time. Gabriel’s statement that the vision **“pertains to the appointed time of the end”** (8:19) is equivalent to his later statement that the vision **“pertains to many days in the future”** (8:26). There is no contextual reason to suppose that these statements refer to the **“end”** of the physical earth or to the final days before the second coming of Christ.

Gabriel gave his explanation of the vision in Daniel 8:20-26: **“The ram which you saw with the two horns represents the kings of Media and Persia”** – Darius the Mede and Cyrus of Persia (8:20). The **“shaggy goat represented the kingdom of Greece, and the large horn that is between his eyes is the first king”** – Alexander the Great, the son of Philip II of Macedon (8:21). The **“broken horn and the four horns that arose in its place represent four kingdoms which will arise from his nation, although not with his power”** – (1) the kingdom of Macedon, (2) the kingdom of Pergamum, (3) the kingdom of Syria, ruled by Seleucus and his descendants, and (4) the kingdom of Egypt, ruled by Ptolemy and his descendants. Daniel’s narrative concerns only these last two.

The **“small horn”** (8:9) represented the king that would arise, **“insolent and skilled in intrigue”** (8:23), Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus III the Great, of the Seleucid line of kings. We will speak of him at length in Daniel 11.

The following definitions should clarify this important vision:

THE RAM (8:3-4) represents the Medo-Persian Kingdom. The large horn represents the king of Persia while the smaller horn represents the king of Media (cf. 8:20).

THE MALE GOAT (8:5-8) represents the Greek Empire (cf. 8:21). The **“conspicuous horn”** of the Goat is Alexander the Great. The breaking of the horn refers to the death of Alexander in 323 B.C. Alexander was born on July 20, 356 B.C. He became king of Macedonia in 336 B.C., at the death of his father, Philip II. He died in Babylon on June 10 or 11, in 323 B.C. at the age of thirty-three.

THE FOUR “CONSPICUOUS HORNS” which replaced the large broken horn (8:8) represented Alexander’s four generals who would divide up his kingdom after his death (8:22). The two horns which are directly relevant in Daniel’s prophecy are those that represented the kingdom of Seleucus (who reigned in Syria), and the kingdom of Ptolemy (who reigned in Egypt).

One of Alexander’s generals received the kingdom of Macedon.

One general ruled over the kingdom of Pergamum, in Asia.

The general who came to be called the **“king of the north”** was Seleucus, who ruled over Syria. His kingdom is known in history as the Seleucid kingdom.

The general called by Daniel the **“king of the south”** was Ptolemy, who ruled over Egypt. This kingdom is known historically as the Ptolemaic kingdom.

THE SMALL HORN that developed from the kings of the north (8:9) represented Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Seleucid king who reigned in Syria. During the last four years of his reign (168-164 B.C.), Antiochus Epiphanes attempted to destroy the Jewish faith (8:11-14).

THE “BEAUTIFUL LAND,” so called by Daniel (8:9), referred to the “Holy Land,” or Palestine, which lay between Syria and Egypt.

THE 2,300 “EVENINGS AND MORNINGS” (8:13-14), refer to the sacrifices which were offered every morning and evening on the altar of burnt offerings which stood in front of the temple. To compute the time implied by this number, one must divide 2,300 by two. This comes to 1,150 days, slightly more than three years. This is the time it would take for the temple services to be restored. At the end of that time, the Maccabean war would have been won and the temple would be **“cleansed.”** The expression **“the time of the end”** (8:17) refers to the end of the horrors which occurred during the reign of Antiochus IV.

JUDAS MACCABEUS – Judas was one of the five sons of Mattathias the priest. He came to be called “Maccabeus” (the Hammer) because of his strategic, incessant attacks on the more numerous and more powerful army of Antiochus IV. His strategy resulted in a great victory over the Seleucids in December, 165 B.C. Following his victory, Judas cleansed the Temple and reinstated the daily sacrifices. He established the Jewish theocratic Hasmonean dynasty which continued as an independent kingdom until 63 B.C. when it became a “client state” of Rome. Hasmonean rule ended in 37 B.C. when it was absorbed by the Romans. Hanukkah is the annual Jewish celebration of the cleansing of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus.

NOTES ON THE PHRASE “the time of the end”: The angel Gabriel told Daniel that **“the vision pertains to the time of the end”** (8:17,19). It is important that one not jump to the conclusion that **“the time of the end”** refers to the end of time or the end of the world. We need to study the expression within its context. Even in the New Testament when Jesus was warning his disciples about what would happen when the temple would be destroyed (Matthew 24:1-3), the disciples asked Him, **“When will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”** Jesus replied, **“See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not the end”** (Matthew 24:6). He continued by saying, **“But the one who endures to the end, he**

will be saved. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:13-14). At no time during the Lord's discourse does **"the end"** refer to the end of the world. In the context, Jesus was speaking about the social order that existed at that time. The "end" of that "social order" came in A.D. 70 when the Romans destroyed the temple and the city. If one follows the Lord's words through Matthew 24:28, one will understand that following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, a tremendous change would occur.

DANIEL'S PROPHECY OF "SEVENTY SEVENS"

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 9:1-2

9:1 "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans –
2 In the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years."

COMMENTARY

During the first year (539-538 B.C.) of the reign of Darius the Mede, Daniel was reading **"the books,"** perhaps a reference to that written by Jeremiah, in which it was stated that the **"completion of the desolations of Jerusalem"** was to take **"seventy years"** (Daniel 1:2; Jeremiah 25:11). The Law of Moses commanded that every seventh year would be a **"Sabbath,"** a year of **"rest,"** for the land (Leviticus 25:2-6). Farmers could cultivate their fields every year for six years, but were supposed to allow the land to lie **"fallow"** during the seventh year. But because Israel had failed to observe this law for many years, they now would have to **"make up"** the neglected **"Sabbath"** years! God was going to allow the destroyed city and temple to remain desolate for seventy years. The exiled Jews would not be able to return to their land until those years were repaid!

Three "deportations" into Babylon are recorded in Scripture, and there would be three "repatriations" of Jews from Babylon. The first deportation, which included the young Daniel, occurred in 605 B.C. The second deportation, including the prophet Ezekiel, perhaps 30 years old (Ezekiel 1:1), took place in 597 B.C. The third deportation was in 586 B.C. when the city and the temple were destroyed (2 Kings 25).

The first wave of returnees from exile occurred approximately seventy years after the first deportation, in 538 B.C., under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, a **“prince of Judah”** (Ezra 1:3-11). In 458 B.C., Ezra the scribe was authorized by Artaxerxes of Persia to lead a second wave (Ezra 7:11; 8:1-34). The third wave occurred in 445 B.C., the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, led by Nehemiah (Nehemiah 2:1).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 9:3-19

3 So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

4 I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

5 we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances.

6 Moreover, we have not listened to Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings, our princes, our fathers and all the people of the land.

7 Righteousness belongs to You, O Lord, but to us open shame, as it is this day – to the men of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those who are nearby and those who are far away in all the countries in which you have driven them, because of their unfaithful deeds which they have committed against You.

8 Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You.

9 To the Lord our God belong compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him;

10 nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets.

11 Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us,

along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him.

12 Thus He has confirmed His words which He has spoken against us and against our rulers who ruled us, to bring on us great calamity; for under the whole heaven there has not been done anything like what was done to Jerusalem.

13 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this calamity has come on us; yet we have not sought the favor of the Lord our God by turning from our iniquity and giving attention to Your truth.

14 Therefore the LORD has kept the calamity in store and brought it on us; for the LORD our God is righteous with respect to all His deeds which He has done, but we have not obeyed His voice.

15 And now, O Lord our God, who have brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and have made a name for Yourself, as it is this day – we have sinned, we have been wicked.

16 O Lord, in accordance with all Your righteous acts, let now Your anger and Your wrath turn away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; for because of our sins and the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people have become a reproach to all those around us.

17 So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplications, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary.

18 O my God, incline Your ear and hear! Open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city which is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You on account of any merits of our own, but on account of Your great compassion.

19 O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

COMMENTARY

As the aged prophet Daniel contemplated the seventy years of Judah’s desolation, he was overwhelmed with sorrow and, **“with fasting, sackcloth and ashes,”** sought the Lord in prayer. His

lengthy prayer (Daniel 9:3-19) was a mixture of contrition, confession, and grief, as he begged God's forgiveness and help. **"So now, our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, and for Your sake, O Lord, let Your face shine on Your desolate sanctuary!"** (Daniel 9:17). **"O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! For Your own sake, O my God, do not delay, because Your city and your people are called by Your name"** (Daniel 9:19). While Daniel was still praying aloud, the angel Gabriel appeared to him **"about the time of the evening offering"** (Daniel 9:21).

Daniel's mention of **"the evening offering"** does not mean that this offering which the Law of Moses prescribed (Exodus 29:38-42) was actually being offered. Although Daniel could have been informed of Cyrus' edict (538 B.C.) to build **"a house"** for Jehovah in Jerusalem, the actual expedition led by Zerubbabel to do so could not have happened before the following year (537 B.C.), and some months must have passed before the altar of burnt offerings was built (Ezra 3:1-3). Work on the new temple was begun the year after that in 536 B.C. (Ezra 3:8). So at the time of Daniel's prayer, during the first year of Darius (539-538 B.C.), there could have been no **"evening offerings"** in Jerusalem. At that time there was no altar and no temple in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Daniel had never forgotten these prescribed offerings and marked his daily schedule accordingly.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 9:20-27

20 "Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God,
21 while I was still speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering.

22 He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, 'O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.

23 At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.”

24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

25 So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be rebuilt again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

26 Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

27 And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

COMMENTARY

Gabriel informed Daniel that he was “**highly esteemed**” in heaven and that, pursuant to his prayer, a divine message was being delivered to him (Daniel 9:23). The divine message was that “**seventy weeks have been decreed...to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place**” (Daniel 9:24). The “**seventy weeks**” are generally understood to mean seventy “**sevens**” of years. The word here translated “**weeks**” literally means “**units of seven,**” so it is logical to think in terms of seventy units of seven years – 490 years. The message, therefore, states that “**atonement for iniquity**” would be accomplished at the end of the 490 years, beginning from “**a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem**” (Dan-

iel 9:24-25). In 538 B.C., King Cyrus of Persia authorized the Jews, by royal decree, to rebuild the temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem. This expedition was led by Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 1:1-11; 2:1-2). But Cyrus' decree could not be the decree mentioned to Daniel by Gabriel, since Cyrus only authorized the rebuilding of the temple. There was, however, a second decree, issued much later in 445 B.C. by Artaxerxes to rebuild the city of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:5-8). This, quite obviously, is the decree indicated by Gabriel (Daniel 9:25).

Adding to the mystery of this prophecy is the further dividing of the seventy weeks into **"seven weeks"** and **"sixty-two weeks"** (Daniel 9:26) and one final **"week"** (9:27). Combining the seven weeks and the sixty-two for a total of sixty-nine (or 483 years), beginning from 445 B.C., we arrive at A.D. 38, when **"Messiah the Prince"** is **"cut off"** (Daniel 9:26). This brings us very close to the actual death of Christ in A.D. 29, and considering the fact that dates in the ancient past are at often at best approximate, this must be regarded as very accurate.

The enigmatic **"seven weeks"** period indicates something that would happen much sooner. It appears to me that the answer is seen in the statement, **"It (i.e. the city of Jerusalem) will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress."** The more important point of the prophecy – the arrival and the death of **"Messiah the Prince"** – is made first, followed then by the secondary mention of the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem, according to the decree of Artaxerxes. It is logical to connect it with the decree to **"restore and rebuild Jerusalem."** A quick reading of Nehemiah's account of the dangers and discouragement faced as they rebuilt the city explains the **"times of distress"** mentioned here in Daniel 9:25.

"Messiah the Prince" – Jesus Christ (who was born to be a king: John 18:37; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 19:16). **"Cut off"** – put to death, as Jesus Christ was crucified.

According to Daniel's prophecy, after the death of the Messiah (9:26), the "**people**" of another "**prince**" would come and "**destroy the city and the sanctuary.**" At the time of this prophecy, Jerusalem already lay in ruins and would not be rebuilt for many years yet! It is possible, even likely, that Daniel knew about Cyrus' decree of 538 B.C., since his prophecy was probably written down a few years later.

Daniel's prophecy regarding the future desolation of the city and the sanctuary would be fulfilled during the final "**one week**" section when a "**prince**" would "**put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering**" (9:27), and "**make desolate**" "**on the wing of abomination.**"

The mention of "**wing**" in connection with the "**abomination of desolation**" brings to mind Christ's descriptive interpretation of Daniel's prophecy. Having warned His disciples that when they saw the "**abomination of desolation**" standing "**in the holy place**" (Matthew 24:15-16), they should "**flee to the mountains,**" so as not to be caught up in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple of God. Christ then spoke the enigmatic words, "**Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather**" (Matthew 24:28). A flock of circling vultures indicates the dead carcass of an animal. Christ was describing the destruction of the spiritually "**dead**" city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the "**corpse**" of Matthew 24:28. The Greek word *aetos* can mean both "**vulture**" and "**eagle.**" Jesus uses the word in both senses here, as He appears to reference the eagle motifs on every Roman banner. The entire area of Jerusalem was for Jews "**the holy place,**" and the presence of Roman troops in and around Jerusalem was for Jews an "**abomination.**"

The words of Christ in Matthew 24:14-28 interpret for us the prophecy of Daniel 9:26-27:

"**Another prince**" – The Roman General Titus, the son of Emperor Vespasian, who besieged Jerusalem. "**Destroy the city and the sanctuary**" – The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple

in A.D. 70. **“Put a stop to sacrifice”** – When Titus destroyed the temple in A.D. 70, he ended Jewish worship according to the Law of Moses. The Jewish priesthood disappeared with the destruction of the temple and the temple archives which included the official genealogical records validating the priesthood.

“On the wing of abomination” – Gentiles were considered **“unclean”** by the Jews, so when the Roman armies entered the temple area they **“defiled”** the temple, in the same way that Antiochus IV Epiphanes would do when he would sacrifice swine on the temple altar and erect in the temple the image of a pagan god (I Maccabees 1). The prophecy of **“the little horn”** (Daniel 8:9-14) concerns Antiochus IV. The prophecy of Daniel 9:24-29 concerns a similar **“abomination of desolation”** which would happen when **“a prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary”** (Daniel 9:26), something Antiochus did not do. The Romans came upon the city like an abominable flood, as though **“on the wing of abomination.”** This occurred in A.D. 70, when Roman soldiers invaded the temple area, burning it to the ground.

“Let the reader understand” are words of warning, not spoken by Christ, but written by Matthew. Matthew wrote before the Jewish rebellion against Rome, and Christ’s words in Matthew 24 had not yet been fulfilled. The rebellion began in the spring of A.D. 66 and the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple were destroyed in the fall of A.D. 70.

DANIEL’S PROPHECY AND THE “END TIMES”: Although some writers argue that Daniel’s prophecy, as least in part, concerns the **“end times,”** still future for us, there is no reason to treat the prophecy in that manner. There are indeed some details here that no one can resolve without question, but the interpretation of the prophecy as a whole appears clear.

The prophecy relates to the work which Christ (**“Messiah the Prince”**) would accomplish when He came to **“finish”** the transgression, to make an **“end”** of sin, to make **“atonement”**

for iniquity, and to bring in **“everlasting righteousness”** (Daniel 9:24). Some would argue that only at the end of the world will transgression be **“finished”** or sin **“ended.”** But when Christ died on the cross, He declared, **“It is finished,”** meaning that by His death He **“condemned sin in the flesh”** (Romans 8:3), and that He has **“set [us] free from the law of sin and of death”** (Romans 8:2).

Furthermore, some interpreters theorize that there is an indefinite period of time between the fulfilment of the sixty-nine weeks and the arrival of the final **“week.”** They believe that the final **“week”** is a period of seven literal years at the very end of the world, when a human **“Antichrist,”** imbued with Satan’s power, will be revealed, Armageddon will occur, the faithful will be **“raptured”** up into heaven, and all of the Jews will be saved when they see with their own eyes the resurrected Christ.

However, the Lord’s own words indicate that the events of Daniel’s final **“week”** were to occur in the first century. He referred to Daniel’s prophecy when He was warning His disciples that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple would occur before that very generation passed away (Matthew 24:34). The word **“generation”** must bear its usual meaning and cannot be twisted to mean the Jewish race, as some have asserted. Because the very people to whom He was speaking would see these events with their own eyes, Christ warned them, **“Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains”** (Matthew 24:15-16). The clause **“let the reader understand”** was not spoken by Jesus, but was written by Matthew! Matthew was telling his readers to pay attention to what the Lord was saying.

Christ’s words in Luke’s gospel are even more specific (Luke 19:42-44; Luke 21:20-24) when He says that **“The days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side, and they**

will level you to the ground and your children within you.” Or when He says, “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near . . . and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” These events occurred during the Roman war against the Jews (A.D. 66-70). There is no doubt that Jesus was referring to Daniel 9:27. Jesus declared that Daniel’s prophecy would take place within a few years, while many of His disciples would still be alive.

The final **“one week”** period of Daniel 9:27 has become fodder for “end times” speculation (cf. Walvoord, 113). Apologists of modern Premillennialism imagine that a Satan-filled “world leader” (the Antichrist) will soon be manifested, if he is not already at work, and that in the middle of this “final week” the “new leader” will “break the peace and desecrate” the Temple, declaring himself to be God, provoking a final conflagration in the Middle East. The truly faithful will have already been “raptured” to heaven (Walvoord, 121-126). In view of this, I urge the reader to consider the following biblical and historical facts.

“Antichrist” is defined in the Bible only in 1 John 2:18-22 and 2 John 1:7-10, where adherents of the Gnostic philosophy are indicated. The **“man of lawlessness”** of 2 Thessalonians 3:3 is widely thought to be the “Antichrist” of the end time, but was **“already at work”** when Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (3:7), and more likely refers to a first century persecutor such as John describes in Revelation 13. It takes a fertile imagination to connect this “person” with times future for us.

“Armageddon” is predicted by popular theorists to occur shortly before the Second Coming of Christ, but a careful study of the Apocalypse arguably demonstrates that the term refers to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. To apply the term to an “end of the world” event is not warranted in Scripture.

The Rapture is a modern teaching that was unknown before the middle of the 19th century. The Bible nowhere mentions it. The Englishman J.N. Darby conceived the idea and C. I. Scofield popularized it in America.

Jews are saved in the same way that the Gentiles are saved, by obedient faith in Jesus (Romans 10-11). The Bible nowhere teaches that the nation of Israel will be instantly converted when they see the Lord at the end of the world.

CHAPTER TEN

DANIEL'S TERRIFYING VISION

(Part 1)

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 10:1-9

10:1 In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, who was named Belteshazzar; and the message was true and one of great conflict, but he understood the message and had an understanding of the vision.

2 "In those days, I, Daniel, had been mourning for three entire weeks.

3 I did not eat any tasty food, nor did meat or wine enter my mouth, nor did I use any ointment at all until the entire three weeks were completed.

4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris,

5 I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz.

6 His body was also like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet, like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult.

7 Now I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, while the men who were with me did not see the vision; nevertheless, a great dread fell on them, and they ran away to hide themselves.

8 So I was left alone and saw this great vision; yet no strength was left in me, for my natural color turned to a deathly pallor, and I retained no strength.

9 But I heard the sound of his words; and as soon as I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground."

COMMENTARY

Daniel's "Terrifying Vision" covers two chapters. The

following explanations concern only Chapter Ten.

DANIEL MOURNS 21 DAYS: It was in 536 B.C., the third year of the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia. The prophet Daniel was about eighty-one years of age, supposing him to have been about fifteen when he was brought to Babylon in 605 B.C. He had been **“mourning”** for **“three entire weeks”** (Daniel 10:2). By **“mourning,”** we should perhaps understand **“fasting,”** since he had not eaten **“any tasty food”** and no **“meat or wine”** during the entire period (10:3). Nor had he used **“any ointment,”** perhaps allowing his skin to dry for lack of moisture. On the **“twenty-fourth day of the first month,”** as he was ending his **“fast,”** Daniel was by the **“bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris”** (10:4). Several other men were with Daniel (10:7).

DANIEL MEETS THE MESSENGER: Looking up, Daniel saw a man standing nearby, dressed in **“linen”** and **“girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz”** (10:5). Since this vision was for Daniel alone, his companions who could not see this man (10:7) were filled with **“a great dread”** and quickly ran away to hide (10:7). Daniel continued to contemplate the unique personage, and described him in this manner: **“His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult”** (10:6). Left alone by his companions, Daniel was drained of his strength and his **“natural color turned to a deathly pallor”** (10:8). Daniel recounted that as soon as this man began to speak, he **“heard the sound of his words”** and **“fell into a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground”** (10:9).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 10:10-12

10 Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees.

11 He said to me, ‘O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now

been sent to you.’ And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling.

12 Then he said to me, ‘Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words.’”

COMMENTARY

The man again reached out his hand and touched Daniel, setting him **“trembling”** on his hands and knees (10:10). Then the man in the vision spoke, calling Daniel a **“man of high esteem”** (cf. 9:23), telling him to **“understand”** what he was about to hear, the **“message”** that he had been sent to communicate to Daniel (10:11). The messenger described in Daniel 10:6 assured Daniel that because he had set his **“heart on understanding”** and had **“humbled”** himself before God, his **“words were heard”** by God. The messenger then said, **“I have come in response to your words”** (10:12).

“Trembling,” Daniel stood up to listen. Later, he would say that the **“message”** was a **“true”** message **“of great conflict”** and that he did indeed **“understand both the message and the vision”** (10:1). The message is contained in Daniel 10:13-21.

THE MESSENGER: Before discussing the **“message,”** it is important to discuss the messenger. In so doing, we must exercise great care and prudence, since we are not told who this being is. It is obvious that the description Daniel provides of the messenger is similar to the description John gives in Revelation 1:13-15 of the divine person who called Himself the **“living One,”** who **“was dead”** but is **“alive forevermore”** (Revelation 1:18). Both persons have golden sashes or belts, flaming eyes, feet like burnished bronze, and thundering voices. It was immediately obvious to Daniel, as it was to John that the messenger was from God. Although we cannot absolutely exclude the possibility, we should not assume that the person in Daniel’s vision was the Son of God before the incarnation. It is, of course, true that before **“taking the form of a bond-servant”** and

the “**likeness of men**,” Christ was in the “**form of God**” (Philippians 2:6-7). John, in his gospel, calls Christ, prior to His incarnation, the “**Logos**” – the “**Word**” which “**became flesh**” (John 1:1, 14).

Nowhere does God address the prophet directly. He always spoke to Daniel through the intermediary of angels/messengers. The angel Gabriel had previously delivered messages to Daniel (8:16; 9:21-23). Only two angels are named in Scripture – Gabriel and Michael. Only Michael is called an “**Archangel**” in the Bible (Jude 9), although Daniel 10:13 says he was “**one**” of the “**chief princes**,” implying that there were other “**archangels**.”

The heavenly “**Messenger**” who addressed Daniel in chapter ten remained unnamed. Since the Messenger himself mentioned Michael (10:13, 21), Michael could not be the Messenger. I conclude, therefore, that we cannot know his identity, only that he was sent to Daniel from God (10:11).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 10:13-21

13 “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.

14 Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter day, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.’

15 When he had spoken to me according to these words, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless.

16 And behold, one who resembled a human being was touching my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said to him who was standing before me, ‘O my lord, as a result of the vision anguish has come upon me, and I have retained no strength.

17 For how can such a servant of my lord talk with such as my lord? As for me, there remains just now no strength in me, nor has any breath been left in me.’

18 Then this one with human appearance touched me again and strengthened me.

19 He said, 'O man of high esteem, do not be afraid. Peace be with you; take courage and be courageous!' Now as soon as he spoke to me, I received strength and said, 'May my lord speak, for you have strengthened me.'

20 Then he said to me, 'Do you understand why I came to you? But I shall now return to fight against the prince of Persia; so I am going forth, and behold, the prince of Greece is about to come.'

21 However, I will tell you what is inscribed in the writing of truth. Yet there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince."

COMMENTARY

THE MESSAGE: The message delivered to Daniel concerned **"great conflict"** (Daniel 10:1). This **"great conflict"** involved the **"prince"** of the kingdom of Persia (10:13) and the still future **"prince of Greece"** who was **"about to come"** (10:20). Since Daniel had already seen visions about the coming kingdom of Greece (Daniel 8), he was able to **"understand"** this message (10:1), at least in part. He very likely could understand how the archangel Michael might be involved in this **"conflict."**

The Messenger stated that **"the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days"** and that **"Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia"** (10:13). The Messenger called Michael a **"prince,"** leading me to conclude that the **"prince"** of Persia" (10:13) and the **"prince"** of Greece (10:20) were not humans, but were themselves angels. The Messenger said that **"the prince of the kingdom of Persia"** had withstood him for twenty-one days (10:13). He further said that **"there is no one who stands firmly with me against these forces except Michael your prince"** (10:21). We understand, therefore, that the **"great conflict"** announced by the Messenger is not a struggle between human governments, or between angels and humans, but between powerful angels! As a result of the words of the Messenger, Daniel

was overcome with **“anguish”** (10:16), and his strength left him.

STRUGGLE AND CONFLICT IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM: We need to understand the nature of the on-going struggle between good and evil. The New Testament makes us aware of what we are up against. The apostle Paul wrote about this to the Ephesians, where he said that our **“struggle,”** as human servants of God, is **“not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”** (Ephesians 6:12).

Luke briefly recounted the Lord’s forty-day personal **“struggle”** with Satan (Luke 4:2). We must remember that Jesus was tempted as a man, not as God (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:15); as a human being He resisted Satan and overcame temptations. Matthew recorded how Jesus cast **“demons”** out of people, as He labored to **“bind”** the **“strong man”** (Matthew 12:29). We learn from this that the Devil is real, that demons actually existed, and no doubt still do. We are told by Peter that angels, **“greater in might and power”** can **“sin”** (2 Peter 2:3, 11). Christ called Satan **“the ruler”** or **“prince of this world”** (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). John called Satan **“the evil one”** (1 John 5:18), **“the devil”** (3:8), and his followers **“children of the devil”** (1 John 3:10). We are not told that Satan was an “angel that sinned,” but it is likely true.

When we are tempted by Satan, the devil, we are tempted by a spiritual creature which may be assumed to be equal in many ways to the angels of God. However, equipped with the **“full armor of God”** (Ephesians 6:13-17), and with God’s help through prayer (Ephesians 6:18-19), we can have the victory.

God did not create sin. He did establish law, which if observed perfectly would result in life (Romans 7:10). Paul said that **“Sin, taking opportunity through the commandment”** produced **“coveting of every kind,”** resulting in death (Romans 7:11). God created beings called angels, making them free moral agents, capa-

ble of choosing to do right or wrong. He also created mankind as free moral agents. In the same way that humans have often rebelled against the will of God, so also did some of God's angels. That much the Bible affirms.

The Scriptures, however, assure us that with God's help, we can overcome the **"evil one"** (1 John 5:13-18). According to Paul, Christians on earth are engaged in a spiritual war, and God's angels appear to be involved in a similar struggle in the **"heavenly"** realm, unseen and unheard by humans. The angels of God are pictured as fighting on behalf of humans. They fight for us in ways unknown to us, and continue to **"minister"** and **"render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation"** (Hebrews 1:14).

The prophet Zechariah portrayed Satan **"standing"** beside Joshua (a variant of Jeshua, Ezra 2:2) the high priest, intending perhaps to harm the high priest, but an **"angel of the Lord"** (i.e. Michael, the archangel: cf. Jude 9) intervened. In the Apocalypse, Michael is pictured as fighting against Satan, the dragon, on behalf of the woman (Revelation 12). The expression **"war in heaven"** (Revelation 12:7) should be understood as spiritual conflict in the spiritual realms, as in Daniel 10.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

DANIEL'S TERRIFYING VISION

PART 2

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 11:1-4

11:1 “In the first year of Darius the Mede, I arose to be a protection for him.

2 And now I will tell you the truth. Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth will gain far more riches than all of them; as soon as he becomes strong through his riches, he will arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece.

3 And a mighty king will arise, and he will rule with great authority and do as he pleases.

4 But as soon as he has arisen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to the authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides them.”

COMMENTARY

INTRODUCTION (11:1): The Speaker in Daniel 11:1 is obviously the same as in 10:14, who said to Daniel, **“Now I have come to give you an understanding of what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to the days yet future.”** The expression **“the latter days”** does not refer to a period in our future, but in Daniel’s future. This vision should not be lifted from its context and made to apply to what many in the 21st century call the “end times.”

It is obvious that throughout his book Daniel referred to kingdoms that would arise, sometimes clearly stating the interpretation. In chapter eleven, it should also be obvious that he was specifically speaking of the conquests of Alexander the Great, of his death, and of the conflict between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies regarding the Holy Land.

The reader must understand that as we discuss Daniel 11, in some instances it will be impossible to be dogmatic. Some expositors, for example, question the usual interpretation of the four kings that would follow Darius (11:2), but aside from this, I think that the following is a fair interpretation of the Messenger's words.

The **"Messenger,"** as I shall continue to call Him, had spoken in Daniel 10 about **"great conflict,"** mentioning the **"prince of Persia"** (10:13) and the **"prince of Greece"** (10:20), who was **"about to come."** These two **"princes"** were not human princes, but angelic beings. The **"prince of Persia"** had been **"with-standing"** the Messenger, and it seems obvious that the **"prince of Greece"** would do the same, but the Messenger could count on **"Michael your prince"** to stand by Him. This **"Michael"** was **"one of the chief princes"** (10:11), apparently the angel whom we know as the Archangel Michael (Jude 9; Revelation 12:7).

THE FOUR KINGS (11:2): The Messenger began with the explanation that He had come **"to be an encouragement"** to Darius the Mede, during Darius' first year as ruler in Babylon (11:1). He then announced the first prophecy of His message: **"Behold, three more kings are going to arise in Persia. Then a fourth"** very wealthy king would come (11:2). The names of those kings were, in order, Cambyses (530-522), Pseudo-Smerdis or Gaumata (522), and Darius I (522-486 B.C.). A fourth king, **"far richer"** than all the others, would **"arouse the whole empire against the realm of Greece"** (11:2).

This fourth king, historically confirmed, was the Persian ruler Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.). This is the famous ruler, also known as Ahasuerus, who took the Jewish girl Esther to be his wife and queen (Esther 1:1). In 480 B.C., Ahasuerus attempted to extend his empire into Greece (Durant, **The Life of Greece**, Pgs. 237-242), only to meet a resounding defeat at the hands of the Greeks. Historians of the period record that in August of 479 B.C., the army of the combined Greek city-states roundly defeated the much larger Persian

force, forcing the Persians to withdraw definitively from Greek territory. This great victory ushered in the long period of prosperity and unity among the Greek city-states, known as the Golden Age of Greece.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT (11:3): The Messenger then told Daniel that **“a mighty king”** would arise, who would **“rule with great authority,”** doing whatever he pleased to do (11:3). This mighty ruler was none other than Alexander, the son of Philip II of Macedon (382-336 B.C.). At the death of his father, the twenty-year-old Alexander reasserted his rule over all of the Greek states, assembled an army, and crossed the Aegean Sea to attack the mighty Persian Empire. Routing the much larger Persian forces, Alexander rushed on, arriving in Susa, the Persian capital one year later. By the time he was thirty, in 327 B.C., Alexander was crossing the Himalayas into India (Durant, **The Life of Greece**, P. 546). His army, tired of fighting and wanting to go home, was on the verge of rebellion. Shortly thereafter, on the shores of the Indian Ocean, Alexander the Great died at age thirty, exhausted, sick, and “half insane” (Durant, 547).

DIVISION OF ALEXANDER’S KINGDOM (11:4): The Messenger continued to tell Daniel that, **“as soon as he [Alexander the Great] has risen, his kingdom will be broken up and parceled out toward the four points of the compass, though not to his own descendants, nor according to his authority which he wielded, for his sovereignty will be uprooted and given to others besides”** his descendants (11:4). So it was that the vast territories conquered by Alexander were divided among his generals: (1) Macedon and Greece went to Antipater and Cassander; (2) Thrace and Asia Minor went to Lysimachus; (3) Syria went to Seleucus I; (4) and the Holy Land and Egypt went to Ptolemy I. This corresponds to the interpretation given to the vision of the **“shaggy goat”** with the **“large horn”** (Daniel 8:21-26), where the **“large horn”** which represented Alexander the Great, was **“broken”** (8:5-8, 21-26), and

replaced by **“four kingdoms”** which arose from his nation (8:21). Of the four divisions of Alexander’s conquered territories, only two are pertinent to the remainder of the book of Daniel.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 11:5-6

5 “Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and will obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed.

6 After some years, they will form an alliance, and the daughter of the king of the South will come to the king of the North to carry out a peaceful arrangement. But she will not retain her position of power, nor will he remain with his power, but she will be given up, along with those who brought her in and the one who sired her as well as he who supported her in those times.”

COMMENTARY

THE KINGS OF THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH (11:5):

The identification of the various rulers mentioned in the prophecy becomes somewhat complicated from Daniel 11:5 through the end of the chapter. The history is further complicated by the fact that many of these rulers bear similar names. We need to remember, as we go on, that the struggles and intrigues between the kings of **“the North”** and the kings of **“the South”** affect principally the Holy Land, called here **“the Beautiful Land”** (Daniel 11:16,41), or **“the glorious land”** (KJV).

BERENICE AND ANTIOCHUS II (11:6): At one point during the hostilities between the North and the South, peace negotiations were held. The Egyptian king Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.) sealed the agreement by giving his daughter Berenice in marriage to Antiochus II Theos, king of the North (11:6). This peace alliance did not last, however, as Laodice, the former wife of Antiochus, conspired to have him and Berenice assassinated (11:6). So Berenice **“lost her position of power”** and Antiochus **“lost his power.”** Berenice’s father, **“the one who sired her,”** died at about the same time. Not only so, but Laodice herself would be assassinat-

ed by Berenice's brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes of Egypt.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 11:7-19

7 ““But one of the descendants of her line will arise in his place, and he will come against their army and enter the fortress of the king of the North, and he will deal with them and display great strength.

8 Also their gods with their metal images and their precious vessels of silver and gold he will take into captivity into Egypt, and he on his part will refrain from attacking the king of the North for some years.

9 Then the latter will enter the realm of the king of the South, but will return to his own land.

10 His sons will mobilize and assemble a multitude of great forces; and one of them will keep on coming and overflow and pass through, that he may again wage war up to his very fortress.

11 The king of the South will be enraged and go forth and fight with the king of the North. Then the latter will raise a great multitude, but that multitude will be given into the hand of the former.

12 When the multitude is carried away, his heart will be lifted up, and he will cause tens of thousands to fall; yet he will not prevail.

13 For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment.

14 Now in those times many will rise up against the king of the South; the violent ones among your own people will also lift themselves up in order to fulfill the vision, but they will fall down.

15 Then the king of the North will come, cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city; and the forces of the South will not stand their ground, not even their choicest troops, for their will be no strength to make a stand.

16 For he who comes against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to withstand him; he will also stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand.

17 He will set his face to come with the power of his whole kingdom, bringing with him a proposal of peace which he will put into effect; he will also give him the daughter of women to ruin it. But she will not take a stand for him or be on his side.

18 Then he will turn his face to the coastlands and capture many. But a commander will put a stop to his scorn against him; moreover, he will repay him for his scorn.

19 So he will turn his face toward the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall and be found no more.

COMMENTARY

CONTINUING WAR BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH

(11:7-14): Verses 7 through 14 describe continuing warfare between Syria and Egypt, each side in succession winning or losing. Then the prophecy foretold that the **“king of the North”** would lay siege to and capture a **“well-fortified city,”** very likely the Mediterranean port city of Sidon (11:15). This king (Antiochus the Great) would **“stay for a time in the Beautiful Land, with destruction in his hand”** (11:16). He would bring with him **“a proposal of peace”** with Ptolemy V, king of the South, sealing it with a marriage between his daughter Cleopatra I and Ptolemy (11:17). He apparently thought his daughter would take his side and **“bring Egypt under his control”** (Baldwin, 188), but his strategy did not work.

Antiochus, in a rage, began to ravage the coastal area, probably the coastlands **“of the Mediterranean including the Greek islands of the Aegean Sea”** (Baldwin, 188). At that point, a **“commander”** came against him, defeating him at Magnesia, in Asia Minor, in 190 B.C. This commander was the Roman Consul Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus (11:16-18). Antiochus would **“stumble and fall and be found no more.”** (11:19). **“While attempting to plunder a temple in the province of Elymais,”** in 187 B.C., Antiochus died (NASB NOTES).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 11:20-28

20 **“Then in his place one will arise who will send an oppressor**

through the Jewel of his kingdom; yet within a few days he will be shattered, though not in anger nor in battle.

21 In his place a despicable person will arise, on whom the honor of kingship has not been conferred, but he will come in a time of tranquility and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

22 The overflowing forces will be flooded away before him and shattered, and also the prince of the covenant.

23 After an alliance is made with him he will practice deception, and he will go up and gain power with a small force of people.

24 In a time of tranquility he will enter the richest parts of the realm, and he will accomplish what his fathers never did, nor his ancestors; he will distribute plunder, booth and possessions among them, and he will devise his schemes against strongholds, but only for a time.

25 He will stir up his strength and courage against the king of the South with a large army; so the king of the South will mobilize an extremely large army for war; but he will not stand, for schemes will be devised against him.

26 Those who eat his choice food will destroy him, and his army will overflow, but many will fall down slain.

27 As for both kings, their hearts will be intent upon evil, and they will speak lies to each other at the same table; but it will not succeed, for the end is still to come at the appointed time.

28 Then he will return to his land with much plunder; but his heart will be set against the holy covenant, and he will take action and then return to his own land."

COMMENTARY

DEATH OF ANTIOCHUS III THE GREAT AND THE RISE OF ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES (11:20): Following the death of Antiochus the Great, his son Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 B.C.) ruled the North, but was **"shattered, though not in anger nor in battle"** (11:20), through a conspiracy "engineered by Heliodorus," his finance minister (NASB NOTES).

In his place, Seleucus's younger brother, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) arose (11:21), appropriately described as **"a despicable person."** By **"intrigue"** and deception, he came **"in a time of tranquility"** and seized the kingdom (11:21-23), entering the **"richest parts of the realm"** and plundering its wealth. Then he **"distributed"** this plunder among the people and accomplished **"what his fathers never did"** (11:24). He then formed a large army and attacked the king of the South (11:25-27), defeating him and carrying away **"much plunder"** (11:28). In 169 B.C., he "plundered the temple in Jerusalem, set up a garrison there and massacred many Jews in the city" (NASB NOTES). Later, he planned a second foray into the South, but was met by a Roman fleet from "Kittim" (Cyprus) "under the command of Popilius Laenas" (NASB NOTES) and forced to return home.

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 11:29-39

29 "At the appointed time he will return and come into the South, but this last time it will not turn out as it did before.

30 for ships of Kittim will come against him; therefore he will become disheartened and will return and become enraged at the holy covenant and take action; so he will come back and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant.

31 Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.

32 By smooth words he will turn to godliness those who act wickedly toward the covenant, but the people who know their God will display strength and take action.

33 Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days.

34 Now when they fall they will be granted a little help, and many will join with them in hypocrisy.

35 Some of those who have insight will fall, in order to refine,

purge, and make them pure until the end time; because it is still to come at the appointed time.

36 Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

37 He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all.

38 But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.

39 He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause him to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.”

COMMENTARY

ANTIOCHUS IV EPIPHANES AGAINST THE JEWS

(11:29-39): Antiochus IV Epiphanes hated the Jews with a passion and determined to destroy them. His heart was **“set against the holy covenant”** (11:28-30) and he attempted to cause the Jews to **“for-sake”** it (11:30). The author of I Maccabees recorded that many Israelites consented to the demands of Antiochus and abandoned their religion, preferring apostasy to a horrible death, while some, apparently, readily adopted without qualms of conscience the idolatrous religion of the Greeks. Antiochus forbade the practice of circumcision, Sabbath observance, and the daily offerings. He set up heathen idols in the temple of God and sacrificed swine on the great altar which stood in front of the temple, building altars to pagan gods on every hand throughout Judah. He savagely persecuted those who refused to accept his commands, killing Jewish mothers who circumcised their children, hanging their dead infants about their necks (I Maccabees 1).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 11:40-45

40 “At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through.

41 He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon.

42 Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape.

43 But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels.

44 But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many.

45 He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to an end, and no one will help him.

COMMENTARY

CONCLUSION (11:45): The remainder of the chapter concerns the actions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, concluding with the statement: **“He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him”** (11:45). The story of his “end” through the heroic struggle of the sons of the priest Mattathias may be read in the books of Maccabees.

ADDITIONAL NOTES: Some commentators maintain, as do the editors of the NASB NOTES, that from Daniel 11:36 to 11:45 “the antichrist is in view” (NASB NOTES). They then proceed to impose on the passage a meaning that is completely foreign to the historical context. Many continue to make speculative predictions, based on the numbers in Daniel 12:11-13, attempting to discover exactly when the world will come to an end! Jesus, however, tells

us that no one knows, not even the angels of God, the day and hour when He will return the second time (Matthew 24:36). Jesus said that He Himself did not know that date! Whether He knows it now, no one can say, but while He was in the flesh He certainly did not know.

DETAILS OF VARIOUS HISTORICAL REFERENCES:

The “three kings” of 11:2 were the immediate successors to Darius the Mede: (1) Cambyses (530-522 B.C.); (2) Pseudo-Smerdis (also called Gaumata) (522 B.C.); (3) Darius I (522-486 B.C.).

The “fourth king” (11:2), who would arouse the empire against the Greeks, was Xerxes I (486-465 B.C.), called Ahasuerus in Esther 1:1.

The “mighty king” of Daniel 11:3 was Alexander the Great, son of Philip II of Macedon.

The “king of the South (11:5) was Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 B.C.).

“One of his princes” (11:5) seems to refer to Seleucus I Nicator (311-280 B.C.) who “gained ascendancy” over the “King of the South” (11:5). He gained great power, ruling over “extensive territories both east and west” (NASB NOTES).

The “king of the South” (Daniel 11:6) was Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B.C.) who “after some years” would form an alliance with the Seleucid ruler of Syria, the “King of the North,”

This “alliance,” or treaty (11:6), referred to as a “peaceful arrangement,” was cemented by the marriage of Berenice (of Egypt) to Antiochus II. Antiochus’ wife, Laodice, would conspire to have both Antiochus and Berenice assassinated, so they did not retain their position or power.

“One of the descendants of her line” (11:7), Berenice’s brother, Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 B.C.), had Laodice put to death.

“His sons” (i.e. those of Seleucus II) mobilized “great forces” (11:10). Their names are Ceraunus (226-223) and Antiochus III (the Great).

The “king of the South” (11:14) was Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181 B.C.)

“The violent ones from among your nation” (11:14) were likely Jews who joined the forces of Antiochus.

The “well fortified city” (11:15) was very likely Sidon, a Mediterranean port. The forces of the South had occupied Sidon but were not able to hold it.

“He who comes against him” (11:16) was Antiochus III (the Great) who was in control of the Holy Land by 197 B.C.

“The daughter of women” was Antiochus’s daughter, Cleopatra I, whom he gave in marriage to Ptolemy V in 194 B.C. She is to be distinguished from the later Cleopatra who beguiled Caesar.

The “despicable person” (Daniel 11:21) was Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the “king of the North” whose forces would “desecrate the sanctuary,” do away with the “regular sacrifice,” and “set up the abomination of desolation” (11:31).

The “abomination of desolation” (11:31) here refers to the altar to the Greek deity Zeus (called “Jupiter” by the Romans), which Antiochus Epiphanes set up in the Jewish temple in 168 B.C. It served as an antitype for the “abomination of desolation” of Daniel 9:27, which would occur when “the prince” (the Roman General Titus, son of Vespasian) destroyed the “city and the temple” in A.D. 70 (9:26). This final “abomination of desolation” referred, not to an altar or a statue, but to the presence of pagan forces in the city and within the temple area. Jesus mentioned this “abomination of desolation,” saying that it would happen during that very generation (Matthew 24:15-34).

CHAPTER TWELVE

DANIEL'S FINAL VISION

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 12:1-4

12:1 “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

2 Many of those who sleep in the dust will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

3 Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

4 But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”

COMMENTARY

Chapter eleven ends with the invasion of the Holy Land by the king of the North (Daniel 11:41). As has been demonstrated, the “**king of the North**” was the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes. This was the “**despicable person**” (11:21) who would “**shatter**” his opponents and murder “**the prince of the covenant,**” possibly a reference to the high priest Onias III (NASB NOTES).

The chapter ends with the words: “**He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.**” Disregarding the chapter break which interrupts the narrative flow, the narrator, possibly the Messenger of Daniel 11:3, foretold that “**at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise**” (12:1). Michael is always pictured as fighting on the side of God’s oppressed people (10:13; Revelation 12:7-9).

A TIME OF GREAT DISTRESS: At that time, there would be a **“time of great distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time”** (12:1). This may be a reference to the Maccabean period, described at length in the first two books of Maccabees. The many who **“will awake”** from **“sleep”** may be a reference to those who were inspired by the Maccabee brothers to fight against the oppressor. These would have **“everlasting life”** while those who caved to the oppressors would have **“disgrace and everlasting contempt”** (12:2).

It is not necessary to interpret this **“awakening”** from the dust as referring to the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. Not only does a literal resurrection not suit Daniel’s context, but Jesus, Himself, used the words “dead” and “life” in a spiritual sense (John 5:25). As Daniel expressed it, those who **“awake”** as though from **“the dust”** appear to be the same as **“those who have insight.”** These would **“shine brightly like the brightness”** of the stars of heaven and would **“lead the many to righteousness”** (12:3). They would stand as heroes to be honored. This conflict would purge, purify, and refine (12:10) many of the people of Judah, but there would yet be many who would continue to **“act wickedly,”** who would not **“understand”** (12:10). Those with **“insight”** would understand and join the battle against the Seleucid tyrant. During the persecutions of Antiochus, there were both those who relented in the face of persecution and those who stood firm in their faith. In spite of difficulties in this chapter which will never be resolved to the satisfaction of all, the final three verses of this chapter seem to refer to the persecutions under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. 8:14; 11:27-28).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 12:5-10

5 “Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river.

6 And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, ‘How long will it be until the end of these wonders?’

7 I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of

the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.

8 As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, 'My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?'

9 He said, 'Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.

10 Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand."

COMMENTARY

THE END OF THE "WONDERS": As Daniel stood listening and watching the vision, he noticed **"two others"** who were **"standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river"** (12:5). One of these two angels addressed the Messenger, the **"man dressed in linen"** and **"who was above the waters of the river"** (10:5), asking, **"How long will it be until the end of these wonders?"** (12:6).

Remaining within the context of these verses, we connect the **"end"** inquired about here with the **"end"** referred to in 11:45. The Messenger was not addressing the end of all of the things that Daniel has seen in his book, but the **"end"** of the terrible struggle that would be in progress between Antiochus and the Maccabees. One must go outside the historical context of Daniel's vision to construe the **"end"** to be the end of the world as we know it. We must be careful here. Where the NASB reads **"the end time"** (12:9), the KJV reads **"the time of the end."** Where the NASB reads **"at the end of the age"** (12:13), meaning, according to the marginal note, "the end of your life," the KJV reads **"at the end of the days,"** which is the literal translation.

When would the oppression end? The question quite obviously concerns the end of the persecutions endured for so long by

the inhabitants of Judah. The answer to that question appears to be found in the last three verses of Daniel 12. As soon as the question was posed (12:6), the **“man dressed in linen”** raised his arms toward heaven and **“swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed”** (12:7). Although this language is similar to that of the previous prophecy of Daniel concerning the **“little horn”** (Daniel 7:8), which would **“wear out the saints of the Highest One”** for **“a time, times, and half a time”** (Daniel 7:25), we must not confuse the two prophecies. Daniel’s prophecy in 7:25 concerned a ruler of Rome and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 66-70, but the Messenger’s prophecy in 12:7 concerned Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In both instances, however, the **“time, times, and half a time”** signifies three and one half years.

An example of this is found in Revelation 12:14 where Michael is again seen waging war with Satan (Revelation 12:7-9), during which time the holy woman (i.e. the Church, God’s holy people) is carried to a place of safety for **“a time, times, and half a time”** (12:14). The war spoken of in the Revelation is the subject of Daniel’s prophecy in Daniel 7:25, where one of the **“horns”** (i.e. “kings”) of the fourth kingdom (i.e. Rome) would **“wear down the saints”** (i.e. the Jewish people) for **“a time, times, and half a time.”**

The apostle John, in the Revelation, gives two parallel figures for this period of time, explaining that it would last **“forty-two months,”** or **“twelve hundred and sixty days”** (Revelation 11:1-3). The Jews used lunar months of 30 days each. Thirty times forty-two equals 1,260 days. It is interesting that the war which culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem began in the spring of A.D. 66, and ended in the fall of A.D. 70, a period roughly three and one half years. Before His death, Jesus had foretold the destruction of Jerusalem that would take place in A.D. 70 (Matthew 24:14-34; Luke 19:41-44; 21:10-32).

BIBLE TEXT: DANIEL 12:11-13

11 "From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

12 How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!

13 But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age."

COMMENTARY

THE 1,290 DAYS: The man "in linen" then told Daniel that **"from the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days"** (12:11). He was obviously talking about Antiochus's action stopping the daily offerings and erecting inside the temple a statue of Zeus. These actions would begin the 1,290 days, roughly **"a time, times, and half a time"** (Daniel 12:7). The fact that Daniel uses the symbolic **"time, times, and half a time"** (i.e. $1 + 2 + \frac{1}{2}$ years = $3 \frac{1}{2}$ years or 1,260 literal days) indicates that we should not hold him to a literal 1,260 days! But he is **"blessed"** who will have the patience to **"wait"** yet a little while longer, a period of **"waiting"** which would bring the 1,290 to a total of 1,335 days. It appears, then, that the struggle to defeat Antiochus would require a little more than three and one half years. Antiochus placed the statue of Zeus in the Jewish temple in 168 B.C. The Maccabees defeated the forces of Antiochus in 165 B.C., re-dedicating the **"cleansed"** temple in December of that year, an event still remembered by the Jews as Hanukkah.

There is no reason to construe the 1,260 or 1,335 **"days"** as years, as some have done. However, in Daniel 9, the context is different, and the angel Gabriel spoke of **"seventy sevens,"** not **"days."** The **"seventy sevens"** begin from the **"decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem"** (445 B.C.) and would last until **"Messiah the Prince"** (Daniel 9:24-25), and Christ Himself informs us that this prophecy concerned the destruction of the temple during the first century A.D. (Matthew 24:15-35). So in Daniel 9 the **"seventy sevens"**

obviously indicate “**years**,” while in Daniel 12, the “**days**” should be construed in the literal sense as “days.”

Obviously, Daniel would have wanted to know what these last visions meant. For many of his prophecies, he had received interpretations from God, but these last prophecies were “**sealed**” and their meaning was “**concealed**” (12:4, 9). The apostle Peter tells us that, at least those prophecies concerning Christ and “**the grace that would come**” to us, were not understood by the prophets who spoke or wrote them (1 Peter 1:10-12). Daniel was told, “**But as for you, go your way to the end** [i.e. end of your life]; **then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age** [i.e. days] (12:13).

Is the interpretation which I have given here the correct one? Perhaps not in all respects, but it at least has the merit of remaining within the context.

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